

AN ⁴
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
EVIDENCE
OF THE
Christian Religion.

By Mr. Squires, now Mr. Newcombe. P. Newcombe, Lady.
The SECOND EDITION, with Additions *Mag. Prof. of Divinity.*



L O N D O N,
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P R E F A C E.

I *T being intended that a Second Edition of An Enquiry into the Evidence of the Christian Religion should be publish'd, I thought it proper just to mention to the Reader that I have made some few Additions to it.*

Particularly, I have added to, and strengthened my Arguments, that the System of the Universe did not always exist, but must have had a Cause of its Existence external and antecedent to it. And I have been more full and clear in my Proof of the Attributes of that Being who exists without Cause, and is the Author of the Existence of this System.

And as I have been fuller and clearer in the Proof of the Attributes of the Deity, so have I in that natural Religion, or Means to Happiness, which is founded on them; and I will presume to say, that the natural Religion which I advance, demonstratively follows from the Attributes.

I have in one Point gone higher than I did before; and as I had proved that if the Author of Man's Existence was a wise, good, and powerful Being, Man must be made capable of obtaining
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Happiness; so I now prove from the Attributes of Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, that his Happiness shall be everlasting, and that he who by a right Use of his Powers shall obtain Happiness, will enjoy it to all Eternity.

I have been more particular in an Enquiry whether it was suitable to the Attributes of God for him to reveal himself, because it has been lately advanced by a very considerable Writer, that the Law, Rule, or Religion, given to all Men, is a Perfect Law, Rule, or Religion, and can have nothing added to it; from whence it will follow, (though this Gentleman does not expressly say so much) that God cannot at all reveal himself; and upon searching this Point, I still find that it is very suitable to the Attributes of God for him to reveal himself; and that the Law, Rule, or Religion given to all Men, is a very imperfect Law, Rule, or Religion, and may have something added to it.

I have not yet found Reason to retract any Thing which I before advanced; still continue to assert there is no Proof of a God à priori; and am ready to make good that Assertion.

I have only to add, my sincere Wishes, that, if I have delivered any Thing contrary to the Truth, it may not be received.

D E F I-



DEFINITIONS.



SECT. I.

DEF. I.  Proposition which expresses the Existence, Nature, Relations, Powers, &c. of Beings, or Things, or Facts; that is, which expresses Things as they are, is call'd Truth.

II. Evidence is the Ground of the Mind's Assent to Truth, or the Means or Medium by which Truth is convey'd to the Mind. There is,

I. Evidence of Sense; or our own Senses, are Evidence to us of certain Facts.

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2. There

2. There is Demonstration; or we can by our own Powers find Connections betwixt Truths, and from Things known, discover others unknown.

3. There is Moral Proof; or the Testimony of Persons concerning the Evidence of their Senses, and an Appearance of Circumstances and Things.

III. The highest Degree of this last kind of Evidence is call'd Moral Certainty.

IV. A lower Degree of it is call'd Probability.

V. An Assent to Propositions, of which we have not Evidence of Sense, nor can demonstrate, is call'd Belief, or Opinion.

VI. When our Belief or Opinion concerning the Existence, Nature, or Relations of Beings, or Things, or Facts, agrees with the Existence, Nature, Relations of Beings or Things, or Facts, and the Mind takes Things to be what they really are, then we are said to have a true, or right Opinion or Belief concerning those Things.

VII. When our Belief or Opinion concerning the Existence, Nature, Relations of Beings, or Things, or Facts, does not agree with the Existence, Nature, Relations of Beings or Things, or Facts, but the Mind takes Things to be what they really are not, then the Mind has a false Opinion or Belief concerning those Things.

S E C T. II.

PLEASURE and Pain need not, nor can properly be defined.

DEF. I. Happiness, is a Term for. collected Pleasure, or a Sum Total of Pleasure.

II. Misery, is a Term for collected Pain, or a Sum Total of Pain.

III. That Being may be call'd a happy Being, who enjoys Pleasure without Interruption of Pain.

IV. That Being a miserable Being, who suffers Pain without Enjoyment of Pleasure.

V. Every Being is in some Degree Happy, the Sum Total of whose Pleasure exceeds his Pains.

VI. Every Being is in some Degree Miserable, the Sum Total of whose Pains exceeds his Pleasures.

VII. Any Degree of Pleasure to a Being, which procures to that Being a greater Degree of Pain, is not to be reckon'd as part of his Happiness, but Misery.

VIII. Any Degree of Pain to a Being, which procures to that Being a greater Degree of Pleasure, is not to be reckon'd as part of his Misery, but Happiness.

IX. Perfect Happiness is the enjoying the highest Degree of Pleasure that sensible Beings are capable of, without any Interruption of Pain.

S E C T. III.

PROP. I. **T**O all sensible Beings Pleasure is preferable to Pain.

II. If to all sensible Beings Pleasure is preferable to Pain, then all such Beings must will and desire Pleasure, and will an Avoidance of Pain.

III. What sensible Beings must always prefer, will, and desire, is most fit for them.

IV. What sensible Beings must always will contrary to, shun and avoid, is most unfit for them.

V. Happiness is then in its own Nature most fit for sensible Beings.

VI. Misery is in its own Nature most unfit for them.

VII. If Happiness is in its own Nature most fit for sensible Beings, and Misery in its own Nature most unfit for them, then there are Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things arising from the Nature of sensible Beings antecedent to all Law and Appointment; and the Happiness of sensible Beings is a Fitness of Things, and the Misery of sensible Beings, an Unfitness of Things.

VIII. And it farther follows, that if the Happiness of sensible Beings is a Fitness of Things, and the Misery of sensible Beings an Unfitness of Things, that whatever is a Means to the Happiness of sensible Beings, is likewise fitting, or fit, and that whatever is a Means to the Misery of sensible Beings, is unfitting, or unfit.

IX. That

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IX. That all those Actions of sensible Beings which tend to the Happiness of sensible Beings, are most fit.

X. That all those Actions of sensible Beings which tend to the Misery of sensible Beings, are most unfit.

XI. That right or true Opinions concerning the Existence, Nature, Relations, Powers of Beings, and Things, and Facts, and concerning the Tendency of our Actions, are fit. And,

XII. That all false Opinions concerning the Existence, Nature, Relations, Powers of Beings and Things, and Facts, and the Tendency of our Actions, are unfit.

XIII. That an Examination into the Evidence of the Existence, Nature, Relations, Powers of Beings and Things, and Facts, and the Tendency of our Actions, is fit. That

XIV. An Assent to Evidence is fit.

XV. And a Dissent from Evidence unfit.



S E C T. IV.

DEF. **T**HAT Power of the Mind by which it discovers the Existence, Nature, Relations, Powers, &c. of Beings, and Things, and the Fitness, and Unfitness of Things from antecedent Knowledge; that is, which finds
Truth

Truth from its Connexion with Truth antecedently known, or believed, is call'd Reason.

As Reason is that Power of the Mind by which it finds Truth, and the Fitness and Unfitness of Things, it follows, that whatever is True or Fit, is also Rational, Reasonable, or according to Reason. And that,

1. It is reasonable that sensible Beings should be happy.

2. That it is unreasonable they should be miserable.

3. That whatever is a Means to the Happiness of sensible Beings is rational, or according to Reason.

4. That whatever is a Means to the Misery of such Beings is Irrational, or contrary to Reason.

5. That all those Actions of Beings which are Means to their Happiness, are rational.

6. That all those Actions of Beings which are Means to their Misery, are irrational.

7. That whoever does not, as far as he has Ability, search out the Means to his Happiness, is irrational.

8. That whoever does not make use of those Means, when found, is irrational.

9. That an Enquiry after Truth is rational.

10. That an Assent to it is rational.

11. That when a Proposition is proposed, which if true will affect our Happiness in the highest Degree, it is highly irrational not to examine whether it be true or not.

12. That

12. That in Order to a rational Assent, it is rational to consider what kind of Evidence Propositions of that Nature are capable of.

That is, in Order to an End, it is rational to consider by what Means it is to be obtain'd, and as some Truths can be supported with Evidence of Sense; or Demonstration; others only by Testimony of Persons, and an Appearance of Circumstances and Things; it must be proper to consider what kind of proof Propositions of this Nature are capable of.

13. That it is highly irrational to expect that Evidence of Propositions, which the Nature of such Propositions will not admit. As thus, suppose the Question was concerning Historical Facts, pretended to be before our own Times; of these there can be no higher Evidence than Testimony of Persons, and a Concurrence of Circumstances, and Things, and Events. It must be then highly irrational to expect other kind of Evidence of such Propositions.

14. That when Moral Proof or Probability is the only Evidence Propositions are capable of, this ought to determine the Assent to such Propositions as truly as Demonstration ought to determine the Assent to Propositions which can be demonstrated.

An Assent to Evidence, is an Assent according to Reason; and a Dissent from Evidence a Dissent contrary to Reason: And the Irrationality of the Dissent consists in dissenting from Evidence, as such, be that Evidence what it will.



SECT. V.

THAT the Christian Religion is a Divine Revelation, is a Proposition, which if true will affect our Happiness in the highest Degree; it is then highly irrational not to consider whether it be true or not.

That if the Christian Religion be true, the Happiness of all those to whom it is promulged, must consist in believing this Religion and obeying its Precepts, is evident from the Nature of this Religion and its repeated Declarations; it must be then highly irrational not to examine whether it be true or not.

In order then to find whether the Christian Religion be a Divine Revelation, we will go to the very Bottom of Things; and first see what is our Evidence of a God: And before we examine whether a certain supposed Being has reveal'd himself, we will consider whether we have Reason to believe, that there is really such a Being.

SECT.

S E C T. VI.

Enquiry the 1st. What is our Evidence of a God?

IN the first Place then we find the Mind empty and void, without any innate Ideas of such a Being, or any Notion of a God, 'till it ascends to it by that which is the Basis of all Knowledge, Ideas of Sensation.

And as there are no innate Ideas of a God, so likewise we can have no Proof of such a Being *a priori*; and if there is really such a Being, we can only come to a Knowledge of his Existence, from a Consideration of the Existence of Things.

We then perceive and feel that certain Things do exist, which Things we find must exist either with, or without a Cause. If they exist without a Cause, then it follows that they must have existed eternally, it being certain that nothing can have a Beginning without a Cause. If they exist with a Cause, then we must consider, what can be the Cause of their Existence.

The Question then is, whether we have Reason to think, that the Things which we see and perceive do exist, existed eternally without a Cause, or whether there is a Cause of their Existence? The most likely Method to obtain Satisfaction in this Point, is to consider the Things
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which do exist, and what we know of the Manner of their Existence.

And here we find certain Chains of Causes and Effects, and many Parts of this System owing their Existence to an antecedent Cause, consequently, we cannot with Reason assert that the whole System exists without Cause.

As thus, if we take any Species of Beings, we say justly, that no one individual of that Species ever existed without a Cause, then we cannot say, that the whole Species composed of those Individuals, existed without a Cause. If every Link in a certain Chain has a Cause, then must the whole Chain have a Cause.

If it is replied, that though every Link in a Chain, every individual of a Species must have a Cause; yet that the Cause is only in the Chain itself, in the Species, and that a Succession of such Individuals is infinite, and consequently, without Cause. I answer, a Succession which depends on something external to the Succession for its Continuance, which is the Case of all the Successions in this System, must have a Cause external and antecedent to it.

For, whatever has been always, and without Cause, must be always; and there cannot be a Cause of the ceasing to be, of that, which had no Beginning, nor Cause. And, if a Succession of Beings, suppose Men, has been always, and without Cause, there can be no Cause of the ceasing to be of a Succession of Men.

But a Succession of Men is liable to cease from several Causes. It may cease by outward
Accidents;

Accidents; and it is possible that those Things which have often been partially destructive to Mankind, may become universally so, and the whole Species destroy'd by them.

It may cease from a Want of the Support and Assistance of other Beings and Things; and Mankind be extinct from a Want of Sustainance.

A Succession of Beings then, which is dependent on something external to the Succession for its Continuance, may quite cease; and if it may quite cease, then it could not exist without Cause; there being no Cause of the ceasing to be of that, which has no Cause of its Existence.

2. A Succession of Beings, each of which cannot exist but in Pain, without the Support and Assistance of something external to the Succession, (which is the Case of all the Successions in this System) must have a Cause external, and antecedent to it.

If there is Pain in an individual of a Succession, there is Cause of that Pain; otherwise, there would be a Beginning, without a Cause. The Cause of Pain in such Individual, must be in the Succession, or not in it. But there cannot be a Cause of Pain in that which exists without Cause. Consequently, a Succession of Beings, each of which cannot exist but in Pain without the Support and Assistance of something external to the Succession, could not exist without Cause; which Cause must be external, and antecedent it.

3. If Beings cannot exist but in Pain, without the Support and Assistance of other Beings or Things; then there is a Fitness in the Parts of such Beings, to suffer Pain without such Support and Assistance, and a Fitness to receive Pleasure from it; and a Fitness in these other Beings, and Things, to give Pleasure. But such a Fitness of Parts to certain Ends, and a Fitness of different Beings, and Successions of Beings to each other; and all these Fitnesses concurring to one grand Use, or End, which is the Preservation of the whole, must have a Cause external, and antecedent to them.

4. There is through all inanimate Nature a Fitness of certain Things to others, and a Dependency of some Parts of this System on other Parts of it. Particularly, all Vegetables depend on something external to themselves, and even Species, for being what they are, and for their continuing to exist. And there is a Fitness in the inanimate Part of Nature to give Pleasure, or preserve Existence in the animate, for which it seems alone to exist. And the whole System of Beings, and Things, is as one grand Machine composed of a vast Variety of Parts, each Part depending on other Parts, and all concurring to certain Uses, or Ends, which is the Preservation or Happiness of the whole. Such a Variety of Fitnesses then in order to the Preservation, or Happiness of a whole System of Beings, must have a Cause external, and antecedent to them.

5. If

5. If a material System is composed of Parts that are changeable, there must be a Cause external, and antecedent, to all the Changes in such a System.

Wherever there is a Change, there is a Cause of that Change; otherwise, there would be a Beginning, without a Cause.

Now the Cause of Change in a material System, must be in the Materials of the System, or not in the Materials of the System. If it is in the Materials of the System, then the Materials must exist antecedently to all the Changes in the System, and likewise, they must exist without Cause; (for, if the Materials had a Cause of their Existence, then that Cause, would be the original Cause of all the Changes in the System; and then, our Proposition would be proved) but, if the Materials of the System exist without a Cause, they cannot possibly have a Cause of Change in them; for then there would be a Cause of Change in that which exists without Cause; there would be in that which has no Cause of its Existence, a Cause of its not being, what it is, which is a Contradiction.

And, if the Cause of Change in a material System cannot be in the System, then it follows, that it must be distinct from, and antecedent to, all the Changes in such a System.

6. There is no Motion in a material System, which is not the Effect of something antecedent to it, or that has not been caused. Now the Cause of Motion in a material System, cannot be in the System, it being impossible for Matter

to begin Motion. Consequently, there must be a Cause of Motion in a material System, distinct from, and antecedent to the System.

If it should be said, that Matter may begin Motion, (though I suppose very few will venture to say this) then I prove, that Motion in a material System must have a Cause external, and antecedent to it, the same Way that I prove all the Changes in a material System, must have a Cause external, and antecedent to them.

7. From the Frame and Constitution of this System, it is evident, that it did not exist without Cause.

A System that never had a Beginning, never can have an End, and if it has always existed, it must always exist; otherwise (as has been observed) there would be a Cause of the Destruction of that which exists without Cause, and has always existed, which is impossible. But from the Nature and Constitution of Things, the * Decrease of Fluids in the Planets; and of Light and Bulk in the Sun, and fix'd Stars; and from the Resistance that is made to the Motions of the heavenly Bodies, it is evident that this System cannot always exist; and if it cannot always exist, then neither has it always existed; that is, it did not exist without Cause.

As for the Argument, *that had the World lasted from all Eternity, as it now is, it is altogether impossible, but that Arts and Sciences must have been brought to a far greater Per-*

* See Dr. Cheyne's Philosophical Principles of Religion.

fection, than they have as yet attained; I take it to be inconclusive, and so shall let it pass; only put those who make Use of it in Mind, that supposing this System had lasted from all Eternity, no one Reason can be assign'd, why Arts and Sciences should not be invented in this Age, or any other particular one, as well as a 1000, or 10000 Ages ago; and consequently, no Argument can be drawn from their being invented in this Age, or any other Age, to prove the World not eternal.

But if we can shew, as we certainly can, that the whole Appearance of Nature, agrees with this System's beginning to exist at a certain Time, we have from hence Evidence that it is not eternal. And if we have a History that informs us, that this System did actually begin to exist at that Time; then our Argument against the Eternity of this System is strengthened.

We have then from the whole Appearance of Nature, and History of the Creation, Evidence, that this System did not exist eternally, and consequently, did not exist without Cause.

If it is said, that though the Existence of this System may be the Effect of a Cause; yet that nothing which I have offered gives us Reason to believe, that the Matter of which it is compounded, is not eternal: I answer, that this is a Point, which at present does not at all concern my Enquiry; if there is a Being, who framed, and fitted up this System, and made Man in particular, a sensible, intelligent Being, capable of Pleasure and Pain, I have all that I want
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under the present Argument. And the other Enquiry, may more properly be left to some future Opportunity.

We have then full Evidence, and have proved under several Particulars, that this System did not exist eternally, and consequently did not exist without Cause. Come we then to consider,

Secondly, What is the Cause of its Existence.

Now, as this System, which began to exist, must owe its Existence to an antecedent Cause; so likewise must that antecedent Cause, if it began to exist, owe its Existence to another antecedent Cause; and so must all Beings, and Things, 'till we ascend to a Being, who never began to exist; which Being, who never began to exist, can have nothing antecedent to it, and consequently, can have no Cause of its Existence.

As we are sure then that the material World does exist, and that it does not exist without Cause; but owes its Existence to something antecedent to it; we are sure likewise, that if that to which it owes its Existence, does not exist without Cause; yet that it derives its Existence from something which does, and that the Being to whom this System owes its Existence, is a Being who exists absolutely without Cause, and is eternal.

And having said thus much, and that the Being, who is the Fountain of Existence to other Beings and Things, is a Being who exists absolutely without Cause, and is eternal, we
have

have said all that is proper upon this Head, having no Ideas which can lead us to a Knowledge of the Manner of his Existence. And as our Knowledge of such a Being, wholly arises from a Consideration of the Existence of Things, we can have no Knowledge of him farther than the Existence of Things will lead us. But Things which exist with a Cause, will not lead us to a Knowledge of the Manner of Existence of a Being, who exists absolutely without Cause, and is eternal.

Neither will they lead us to a Knowledge of the Substance of this Being; there being no Connexion between the Substance of a Being, and his Works. In these Particulars then is our Enquiry to stop.

But though the Things which do exist, will not lead us to a Knowledge of the Manner of Existence, nor to the Substance of a Being, who exists absolutely without Cause, and is eternal; yet they will lead us to several of his Attributes, and from an Effect we can justly argue to its Cause; and we may find certain Attributes connected with others. Thus

Secondly, We can prove that the Being who framed, and fitted up this System, is an intelligent Being.

When we see a Machine composed of a vast Variety of Parts, which regularly, and constantly do distinct Offices, and all concur to one grand Use, or End, we pronounce it to be the Effect of Intelligence; having observed like Effects to be owing to Intelligence, and not know-

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ing any other Cause that is capable of producing them. When then we see the grand Machine of the Universe composed of a vast Variety of Parts, all suited, and fitted to each other, and each Part regularly, and constantly doing distinct Offices, in order to the Preservation of the whole, if we pronounce not this to be the Effect of Intelligence, we are inconsistent with ourselves, and with constant Experience; we judge differently in this Case, from what we would do in all others of a like Nature.

We have then Reason to believe the Universe the Effect of Intelligence, or have no Reason to believe any Machine, that we did not see the forming of, the Effect of Intelligence.

Again, not only the Nature of Things which do exist, and the Manner of their Existence, lead us to an intelligent Cause; but likewise, Intelligence being in this System, it is from thence evident, that the Cause of this System is an intelligent Being.

It is impossible for a Being to give a Perfection which he possesses not himself; for then there would be an Effect without a Cause, or a Beginning without a Cause, which is impossible. And to assert that an unintelligent Being can give Intelligence, is to assert that there may be an Effect without a Cause.

III. We find that the Being, who framed and fitted up this System, and gave it its present Form and Appearance, must be a Being of great Power.

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We are sure that the Power of this Being must be equal to the Effects of it; that is, that he must be capable of making and sustaining a World, because in Fact he has done it: We are sure likewise, that his Power must be unlimited by any Being which derives its Existence from him; that none of his own Creatures can successfully resist his Power; for then he would give a Perfection which he possess not himself; there would be an Effect without a Cause, or a Beginning without a Cause, which is impossible. And this is full enough for us at present, under a general Consideration of his Power.

IV. The Being who framed, and fitted up this System, must be a wise Being.

Wisdom lays down the best End, and pursues it by the best Means; that is, by Means most effectual to the proposed End.

The best End that any Being can propose is the Happiness of Beings.

If then sensible Beings are capable of Happiness, if Existence is better than Non-Existence to them, (and our Desire after a Continuance of Existence, is Conviction to us, that it is) then the supreme Being, when he determin'd to make such Beings, laid down the best End.

That he makes Use of Means most effectual to this End, and to the Preservation of all kinds of Beings, not only their continuing to exist is Evidence; but likewise these Means are every where visible.

Thus we find Instincts, or Desires in all Beings, which push them on to preserve Existence.

Different Beings are wonderfully framed, and constituted, and fitted to each other, as has been observed, in order to the Continuance of Existence, and all Things concur to the Preservation of the System.

If any then should doubt the Wisdom of the End; that is, whether Existence is better than Non-Existence to sensible Beings; they must wait for farther Evidence, which will appear in due Time. But the Wisdom of the Means, in order to the Continuance of Existence, cannot be question'd, they being, through all Nature most conspicuous.

V. The Being who exists without Cause, must be an independent Being.

Independency is included in existing without Cause, and as a Being who exists without Cause, derives nothing from another; so can nothing be taken from him by any other. There can be no Cause of the Destruction of that, which has no Cause of its Existence. And a Being who derives nothing from another, and can have nothing taken from him by any other, is an independent Being.

VI. The independent Being, who exists without Cause, must be unchangeable; that is, he must always exist with the same Powers, Attributes and Qualities, and consequently must always act by the same Motives and Reasons.

If a Being with certain Powers, Attributes, and Qualities, has no Cause of its Existence,
then

then these Powers, Attributes, and Qualities have no Cause.

If Powers, Attributes, and Qualities in a Being have no Cause, they can never cease to be in that Being; for then there would be a Cause of the Ceasing to be of that which never had a Beginning, which is impossible.

Again, wherever there is a Change, there is a Cause of that Change; otherwise, there would be a Beginning without a Cause.

The Cause of Change in a Being, must be either external, or internal.

But there can be no external Cause of Change in an independent Being, who exists without Cause; for then he would be a dependent Being, dependent on other Beings or Things for Powers, Attributes, and Qualities, which had no Cause; which is a Contradiction.

And for a Being, who exists without Cause, to have in himself a Cause of Change; that is, a Cause of not being what he is, is likewise a Contradiction.

It follows then, that a Being who exists without Cause, must always exist with the same Powers, Attributes and Qualities. And if a Being must always exist with the same Powers, Attributes and Qualities, then must he always act by the same Motives and Reasons, and be an unchangeable Being.

VII. The intelligent, independent Being, who exists without Cause, and is Author of this System, must be perfectly happy.

There is no Pain without Cause.

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The Cause of Pain in a Being, must be either external, or internal.

It cannot be external to an independent Being; for then he would be a dependent Being, dependent on other Beings, or Things for his Happiness.

A Being who exists without Cause, cannot have a Cause of Pain in himself.

Then it follows, that an intelligent, independent Being, cannot suffer Pain.

2. An intelligent, independent Being, is not only incapable of suffering Pain, but likewise he must enjoy Pleasure, or, be a happy Being.

A Being who communicates Pleasure to other Beings, must enjoy Pleasure himself; otherwise, he would give a Perfection, which he possess not; there would be an Effect without a Cause, or a Beginning without a Cause, which is impossible.

Again, A Consciousness of possessing Powers, capable of being exerted to certain Ends, and a real exerting of them to those Ends, must give great Pleasure to the Being who possesses, and exerts these Powers. And the greater the Powers, and the more certain their Effects, the greater is the Pleasure to the Possessor of them.

A Power then of making, and sustaining of a World; of forming Beings, and Things, and suiting of them to each other, in order to the Preservation or Happiness of the whole; and the real Exercise of this Power, must give great Pleasure to the Being who possesses it.

Further,

Further, The intelligent, independent Being, who exists without Cause, must not only be a happy Being; that is, enjoy Pleasure without any Interruption of Pain; but he must likewise be perfectly happy; that is, he must enjoy the highest Degree of Pleasure, that any Being is capable of.

As he is the Fountain of Pleasure to other Beings; that is, of all that rational Pleasure which does not produce Pain, he must himself enjoy the highest Degree of it; otherwise he would give more than he possess, there would be an Effect without a Cause.

Again, As the Powers of a Creator vastly exceed the Powers of his Creatures, so must his Pleasure from a Consciousness of such Powers, and from the real Exercise of them, vastly exceed any Pleasure which they can have from a Consciousness, or Exercise of their Powers.

Further, There is great Pleasure in communicating Pleasure, in a Consciousness of bestowing that on Beings, which they always must prefer, and chuse; a Being then who communicates to other Beings all that true Pleasure, or Happiness which they possess, must have Pleasure from a Communication of Happiness, which no created Being can be capable of.

Lastly, As the supreme Being is an independent Being, he has Pleasure which no dependent Being is, or can be capable of.

He must have great Pleasure from reflecting, that whatever he has, it is underived, held of none, nor can possibly be taken from him; that

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he is self-sufficient, and his Felicity everlasting.

VIII. The perfectly happy, independent Being, who exists without Cause, must be a good Being.

A good Being is one who always wills the Happiness of Beings, and promotes it as far as he has Power.

Now a happy, independent Being, must will Happiness to other Beings.

First, Because Pleasure is in itself a Motive to the Will. All Beings must prefer Pleasure to Pain. They must prefer it as such, wherever it is, and in other Beings, as well as in themselves.

What they must prefer, they must will, when there is not a Motive to the contrary.

But a perfectly happy, independent Being, can have no Motive to will the contrary; that is, to will Pain, as such. Motives to will Pain, arise in weak, dependent Beings, liable to Injuries and Want, from a Sense or Dread of Pain; but a happy, independent Being, can neither fear, nor suffer, consequently, can have no Motive to will Pain as such. And if a Being can have no Motive to will Pain as such, and has always Motives to will Pleasure; that is, Happiness, then he must always will Happiness.

Again, the perfect Happiness which a Being himself enjoys, is a Motive to him to will Happiness to other Beings; and a Being always pleased and happy, always wills Happiness.

Further,

Further, as the supreme Being is a Creator, he must always will Happiness to his Creatures, he must will them that which they must always prefer; otherwise he would will in opposition to himself, he would will the Imperfection of his own Works, which is impossible.

It is abundantly evident then, that the supreme Being must always will Happiness to other Beings.

And, as he must always will the Happiness of Beings, so must he always act agreeably to his Will, and promote their Happiness as far as he has Power.

Dependent Beings subject to Pain, may often be turn'd aside from executing that which they will, by a Dread of Danger, or Consequences; but a happy, independent Being has nothing to suffer or fear; consequently, can be by nothing turn'd aside from executing that which he wills, when he has Power to do it.

It is evident then, that the happy, independent Being who is the Author of this System, is a good Being; one who always wills Happiness to other Beings, and promotes it as far as he has Power.

It follows, that his End in Creation was to communicate Happiness; and that whatever Pleasure he might himself take in the Performance, he could have none in Opposition to the Happiness of his Creatures; for then (as he always must will their Happiness) he would will in Opposition to himself, which is impossible.

We find then, the Attribute of Goodness, in the Author of this System, connected with his Happiness; and particularly we find, that his End in making sensible Beings, was to communicate Happiness to them.

But *Secondly*, We not only find the Attribute of Goodness in the Author of this System connected with his Happiness, but we likewise find in Fact that he is a good Being, and can prove it directly *a posteriori*, from his Works.

Whatever tends to our Preservation, is framed, constituted, and fitted to give us Pleasure.

What tends to our Destruction, is framed, constituted, and fitted to give us Pain.

As Things good for us grow hurtful when used immoderately, Pain is annex'd to the immoderate Use of them in order to stop us from the Evil; here is Wisdom and Goodness.

Again, as he has made us capable of contributing to the Happiness or Misery of those of our own Species, so has he annex'd Pleasure to a Consciousness of designing, or promoting of their Happiness; Pain, to a Consciousness of designing, or promoting of their Misery; and from hence we have Demonstration, that he is a good Being.

No Man makes happy, but he secretly applauds the Action; no Man makes miserable, but he secretly condemns himself. No Man designs Ill, and stands unreproach'd by himself; no Man designs Good, that has not Pleasure, even from that Intention. No Man voluntarily inflicts Misery, but to gratify some Passion or
Desire,

Desire, which seem'd to stand in opposition to the Happiness of others; and no Man but suffers Remorse and Anguish, when the Gratification, which excited the evil Action, ceases. Nay, no Man so much as sees the Miserable without feeling Pain, unless some particular Displeasure has been conceiv'd against the Sufferer, on Account of supposed Injury to ourselves, or others.

From hence alone then, from God's annexing Happiness to a Consciousness of designing and promoting the Happiness of others, and Pain to a Consciousness of designing or promoting their Misery; and from that Pity, which is naturally in all Men, we have Demonstration that God is a good Being.

And now having proved, that God is a good Being, our Argument is compleat, that he is a wise Being, and that when he made sensible Beings, he laid down the best End, which was, their Happiness.

IX. As God is a good Being; that is, as he wills and promotes the Happiness of all Beings, so far as he has Power, so is he a Being, who in all his Actings with sensible Beings, acts according to Reason and a Fitness of Things; that is, he really promotes their Happiness.

Beings may will Happiness to other Beings, and promote it as far as they have Power, and yet fall very short of their End; of which we ourselves are sad Instances. They may want Ability to discern, or Power to execute that which is best, and most for the Happiness of

Beings. But in neither of these Cases can the supreme Being be defective, he always must know the Fitness and Unfitness of Things; what tends to the Happiness, and what to the Misery of his Creatures, and cannot possibly want Power to act agreeably to his Will.

And *First*, A Being who is Creator, who has Wisdom sufficient to form a World and suit and fit all Beings and Things to each other in order to the Preservation of the whole, and who has fitted a Variety of Things to give Pleasure to his Creatures, must know whether Beings could be made capable of Happiness; that is, whether Existence would be better than Non-Existence to them. And he also must know the best possible State of Existence for all Ranks and Orders of Beings; that is, that State which would produce the most Happiness to the whole Creation.

And as he must know whether Existence would be better than Non-Existence to sensible Beings; and also the best possible State of Existence for all Ranks and Orders of Beings; so must he always know what is best for his Creatures in all Stages of their Existence, and what will tend to the Happiness or Misery of the Creatures whom he has form'd.

And as the supreme Being, who is the Author of this System, must at all Times know the Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things; what will contribute to the Happiness or Misery of his Creatures; so must he always have Power to act agreeably

greeably to these Fitnesses; that is, to do that which will most contribute to their Happiness.

As he is an independent Being, his Powers are independent, consequently, cannot be limited or restrain'd by any Being whatsoever.

As he is Creator, his Power cannot be limited by his Creatures; those whom he has formed cannot successfully resist him.

And if his Power cannot be restrain'd or limited by any Being whatsoever, he has Power to act agreeably to the Fitnesses of Things; that is, to do that which will most contribute to the Happiness of Beings.

It is evident then, that as the supreme Being always wills Happiness to other Beings, knows the Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things, what will contribute to the Happiness or Misery of his Creatures; and has Power to act agreeably to these Fitnesses, that is, to really promote their Happiness; he must in all his Actings with such Beings, act according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things; that is, he must do that which is most for the Happiness of such Beings.

And now having proved that the Being who exists without Cause, and who is the Author of the Universe, is an intelligent, powerful, wise, good Being; and a Being, who in all his Actings with sensible Beings, acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things; that is, really promotes their Happiness; all the other moral Attributes, which are generally ascribed to the Deity, as Justice, Holiness, Faithfulness, &c. are included.

A Creator

A Creator can only be said to be unjust to his Creatures one of these Ways; either,

By making them incapable of Happiness.

By defeating them of any Happiness he has made them capable of.

Or by not making them happy in Proportion to their deserving to be so.

But a Being who knows the Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things, what will contribute to the Happiness or Misery of his Creatures; who always wills their Happiness; and in all his Actings with them acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things, could not make them incapable of obtaining Happiness, nor defeat them of that Happiness they were made capable of; nor so order Things that they should not be happy in Proportion to their Desert.

And as Justice is included in the Attribute of Goodness, and in acting according to Reason and a Fitness of Things, so is Holiness and Faithfulness. And as a Being who never swerves from Reason is Holy, so neither can he deceive, promise, and not perform; that is, he is faithful and true.

X. He is Omnipresent.

That is, as he always governs his Creatures in the best Manner, he is at all Times so far present with them, as to be able to do this.

XI. He is Omniscient.

That is, he must know the Nature and Powers of his Creatures, and all their Actions; a Creator must have perfect Knowledge of that which he has formed.

XII. He

XII. He is a free Agent, and does not act by Necessity, but Choice.

Now that God is a free Agent, I prove by one single Argument.

Every Man naturally thinks himself a free Agent, and blames or applauds himself after certain Actions; which blameing, or applauding of himself, is an Effect of a Consciousness, it was in his Power to have done otherwise.

Now then, if Man is not a free Agent, but is obliged in the Circumstances he is at any Time in, and Causes he is under, to do that one Thing he does, and cannot possibly do otherwise, he has Faculties given him upon the Exercise of which he is necessarily deceived, and the Author of his Existence, by giving him such Faculties has necessitated him into Error; and consequently acted contrary to Reason, and a Fitness of Things in his Creation.

But the Author of his Existence, is a Being, who always acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things, consequently, cannot necessitate him into Error, or deceive him; then it follows that Man is a free Agent.

But if Man is a free Agent, God must be one; otherwise, there would be an Effect without a Cause, or a Beginning without a Cause; or a Perfection in a Creature, which is not in the Creator, which is an Impossibility.

There are many other Arguments which prove Man a free Agent, and all these prove that God is a free Agent.

And

And there are many Arguments taken from the Nature of God, and his Works, which prove him a free Agent; but these having been fully urg'd by other Hands, I omit them, imagining that what I have said, is sufficient to prove my Point.

And now having proved that the Author of this System is an eternal, intelligent, wise, powerful, independent, unchangeable, good, just, holy, omnipresent, omniscient Being; and a Being who always acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things: We include all these Attributes in one general Word, and call him a perfect Being.

Perfect is a relative Word, and signifies the Agreement of something to a certain Measure, or Standard in our Minds. Thus, a Being, who always lays down the best End, and pursues it by the best Means, is perfectly wise, wise without any Default or Abatement.

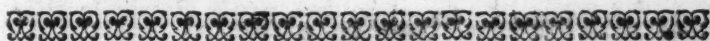
Beings may be counted more or less perfect, as they possess Powers, which are capable of being Means to Happiness, and as they really exert them to that End.

And that Being who possesses all those Powers, Attributes and Qualities, which are capable of being Means to the Happiness of himself, and other Beings, in the highest, and most perfect Degree they can be possess, and who really does employ them to the End, is the best of all Beings, and a perfect Being.

We have then full Evidence, that the Being, who framed and fitted up this System, is an eternal

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ternal, intelligent, powerful, wise, independent, unchangeable, good, holy, just, faithful, omnipresent, omniscient, free Being, and a Being who in all his Actings with sensible Beings, acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things; or, that he is a perfect Being. And whoever believes there is no such Being, must likewise believe there may be a Beginning without a Cause, or an Effect without a Cause; that is, he must believe Impossibilities, or Contradictions. And whoever does not act agreeably to the Belief of such a Being, acts directly contrary to Reason, and a Fitness of Things.



S E C T. VII.

Enquiry the second, After Happiness.

WHAT are those Actions of Man, that are agreeable to the Belief of an *eternal, intelligent, wise, good, &c.* Being? Or, supposing there is really such a Being who is the Author of Man's Existence, how must Man act, to act according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things? How must he act in order to obtain Happiness?

And this Enquiry is highly proper, previous to our Enquiry into the Evidence of a pretended

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Reve-

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Revelation; for if the pretended Revelation should require any Practice of us inconsistent with the Attributes of the Deity, we are to reject it.

In the first Place, then, we find, that Man is form'd with certain Powers and Faculties, which Powers and Faculties must be given him by his Maker, in order to the Happiness of himself, or other Beings. It is necessary, then, that he keep all these Powers and Faculties unimpair'd, that so he may be able at any Time to do that which he is able to do naturally.

If he impairs his Powers, and Faculties, he loses the Means to his Happiness; he likewise loses a Pleasure which would naturally arise from the exerting of unimpair'd Powers and Faculties: And add to this, he must displease that Being who gave them to him.

Whatever, then, tends to weaken the Powers of either the Mind, or Body of Man, that lessens his Ability to perceive, apprehend, reason, judge, will, or act; directly tends to make Man miserable.

Under this Head it may be shewn, that all Degrees of eating and drinking, beyond what tends to Health, and Refreshment; an Indulgence in sensual Gratifications; and all those Vices which may be rang'd under the general Word Intemperance, are contrary to Man's Happiness.

2. As it is Man's Duty to keep his Powers unimpair'd, so also is it, to endeavour to preserve his Existence.

If

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If God has made Man, and given him Means to preserve his Existence, he wills that they be made use of to that End.

Whoever, then, neglects the Means to Self-preservation, or abuses them, to the injuring of his Health, acts directly contrary to the Will of God, and consequently to his own Happiness.

And if he who neglects the Means of Self-preservation, or abuses them to the injuring of his Health, acts contrary to the Will of God, and his own Happiness; in a much greater Degree does he do so, who wilfully deprives himself of Existence. This is direct Opposition to God; is throwing him back his Favours, and is the highest Degree of Rebellion against him.

II. With regard to his own Species, it is evident, that Happiness must arise to Man,

1st, From his being a just, or righteous Being, that is, one who violates the Rights of no Man, and renders to all their Dues.

2^{dly}, From his being a good Being, that is, one who wills and promotes the Happiness of all Mankind, as much as is in his Power.

Every Man is by the Frame and Constitution of Things, possess'd of some Right or Property, which cannot be violated without Pain and Injury to him; then God wills that this Right or Property be not violated, and that every Man be left uninterruptedly to possess that which by the Constitution of Things belongs to him.

Under this Head it may be shewn, that Murder, Adultery, Theft, Oppression, Tyranny, Slander,

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Slander, Backbiting, Deceit, Lying, Treachery, Insolence, Flattery, &c. are so many Instances of Injustice, and consequently are opposite to the Will of God.

Again, all Mankind, by the Frame and Constitution of Things, stand in certain Relations to each other, from which Relations there arise Dues and Rights which cannot be with-held from those to whom they are due, without Pain, and Injury to them; then God wills that they be not with-held, but that every Man have that which by the Constitution of Things belongs to him.

Here it might particularly be shewn, that all Undutifulness of Children to Parents, Parent's Neglect of Children, whether in point of Instruction, or Maintenance; all Disturbances of the Peace of Society, and of that of Families; all Breach of Contracts, (particularly all Breach of Marriage Contracts) Breach of Promises, &c. are with-holding of Dues, and consequently opposite to the Will of God.

And as God wills that the Rights of no Man be violated, and that all have their Dues, so must he constitute Things that Happiness must be the Effect of Righteousness, and Misery of Unrighteousness.

And could just and righteous Actions produce Misery to Man; unjust, cruel, and tyrannical ones, Happiness; God must have constituted Things contrary to Reason, and a Fitness of Things

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Things, and be not a good Being; or, he must act in Opposition to himself.

2. As Happiness must be the Effect of Righteousness, yet much more must it of Goodness; and every Man must be happy in Proportion as he is a good Being, and miserable in Proportion as he is an evil one.

God always wills Happiness to the whole Creation, and has made Man capable of willing and promoting the Happiness of his Species; then God wills that Man always will Happiness, and promote it as far as he is able.

Man may not always be able to do that which tends to the Happiness of others; he may want Ability to discern what is best for them, or Power to execute it; and so far as he falls short in either of these Particulars, he is an imperfect Being. But he may always will Happiness, and God always wills that he do this; that he be a benevolent Being.

Here it may be shewn, that Envy, Hatred, Malice, Pride, are so many Instances of Malevolence, and consequently directly opposite to the Will of God.

And as God always wills that Man will Happiness, and be a benevolent Being; so does he, that he promote it as far as he has Power. Man may will Happiness, yet for the Sake of what he possesses, fall short in promoting it. He may say, *he fed, he cloath'd*; but when that which should feed and cloath, is to be parted with by himself, in that Thing desire to be pardon'd:
But

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But God not only wills, but in all Actings with sensible Beings, promotes their Happiness: Consequently Man must, if he would be acceptable to God, promote Happiness whenever he has Opportunity.

He must save from Evil, or deliver out of it; feed the Hungry; cloath the Naked; visit the Sick; deliver the Oppressed; protect the Fatherless, the Stranger, and the Widow: These are Actions which God wills that Man perform as often as he has Opportunity, in consequence of Benevolence or willing Good. That is, God always wills that Man be a good Being.

And if Happiness shall be the Effect of Righteousness, yet much more, and in a far greater Degree, shall it of Goodness. If doing no Ill, with-holding not that which is due, is pleasing unto God, yet much more pleasing shall doing Good be to him. This is joining with our Maker in the great Work in which he himself is employ'd; and is resembling of the Deity.

III. Man is placed amidst Creatures of much lower Powers than himself, who are fitted to serve him with their Labour, or to be Sustenance for him. And they are not free Agents, but determin'd by Instincts to preserve themselves, and their Species; which is certain Evidence that they were form'd for the Use of some other Beings.

Some of these Creatures, however useful in the Creation, and to Man in particular Instances, yet would be destructive to him if their Species
were

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were numerous ; these, then, he has a Right, from his Duty of Self-preservation, to destroy. Others of them which can assist him with their Labour, or serve him for Food, and which seem form'd for no other End but the Use of Man, we presume that God wills that he should make use of. But then he is to remember, when he makes the Creatures labour, to do it with Mercy ; to lay no grievous Burden on them, and what is not proportion'd to their Strength ; to use them with no unnecessary Severity, but to be as compassionate towards them, as is consistent with their being serviceable to him. And further, when he takes away their Lives, he is to remember to do it in that Manner which is least painful to them.

This is behaving towards the Creatures acceptably to the Creator, who wills the Good of the whole Creation.

IV. With regard to the supreme Being, who is the Creator, the Preserver, and the Bestower of Happiness on Man, it is evident, that certain Duties arise from Man to this Being, in the Performance of which, he must find Happiness. And as Man has Ability to discover the Relation which he stands in to God, God must will that he discover this Relation, and that he perform towards him those Duties which arise from it.

It is true, God is not like Man, to receive Damage if we pay him not that which belongs to him ; but still it is Man's Duty to render to God
that

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that which is due to him, whether the withholding it be Injury, or not. And,

1. It is Man's Duty to God, to acknowledge with all Humility, the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, by which he was form'd.

2. To render Thanks to the divine Majesty for his Existence, his Preservation, and his Capacity for Happiness; for all that he possesses that is desirable and good.

3. As the Supreme Being is the most powerful of all Beings, it is Man's Duty to fear him more than all other Beings; that is, to more fear to offend him.

4. As all Things are under the Disposal of Providence, it is Man's Duty to God to be patient under whatever befalls him, and never to repine at the Dispensations of the most High.

5. To trust in God. As God always knows what is best for us, as he constantly wills our Happiness, and has Power to execute what he wills, we are to trust that he will deliver us, when a Deliverance is best for us.

6. To endeavour to know his Will. As the divine Will is that Rule by which we must act, if we would obtain Happiness, we ought to endeavour after a Knowledge of it, which is to be obtain'd by a Consideration of his Attributes.

7. To perform his Will. Better is it not to know the divine Will, than to know it, and not conform to it. To know the divine Will, and not to conform to it, is setting up to be wiser than God, and is Rebellion against him.

8. As

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8. As Man is an Offender before God, as he is conscious of not always conforming to his Will, it is his Duty to acknowledge himself to be such, and to beg of God to pardon him.

9. To love God. When we have Pleasure in the Happiness of a Being, we are said to love him.

If we have Pleasure in the Happiness of a Being, or if we love a Being, his Pleasure is a Motive of Action to us.

A great Motive to us to love a Being, or have Pleasure in his Happiness, is, Kindnesses received; and the Love generally arises in Proportion to the apprehended Kindnesses.

When then we consider the Supreme Being as the Author and Fountain of our Existence, and of all that we possess that is desirable and good, we are justly excited to love him, that is, to have Pleasure when his Will is conform'd to.

This I apprehend is loving of God, the Consequence of which Love is, that his Will is a Motive of Action to us separate from a Consideration of our own Interest.

And surely if any Kindnesses can excite Love, excite us to take Pleasure when the Will of a Being is conform'd to; those which we have receiv'd from the divine Being will excite it.

10. It is our Duty to God to worship him.

As we are to acknowledge God's Attributes, and our Dependency on him; to thank him for what we possess, and to implore his Pardon for our Offences against him; and as our Bodies, as

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well as Souls, are his; it is proper that these Duties be accompanied with such bodily Postures, as Nature, or Custom, have made expressive of the Dispositions of our Minds. Thus kneeling is the Posture of a Suppliant; we ought then to fall on our Knees when we approach the great God of Heaven.

11. To worship him in publick. When we have discovered the Being and Attributes of God, and the Relation which we stand in to him, we ought publickly to testify to others that we acknowledge him as our God. This is Duty to Men as well as God, that they may be excited also to worship him.

12. To set apart some particular Time for his Service. As all our Time, that is, our whole Lives, are given us by him, it is our Duty to set apart some Portion of them for his Worship.

Lastly, It is Man's Duty to God to resemble him in his Attribute of Goodness, and to be a good Being. In what better State could a Being be form'd, than to have Powers given him by which he is capable of resembling his Maker? How undutiful, then, is Man to God, how ungrateful, how unworthy of what he possesses, if he does not employ them to this End?

All these are immediate Duties from Man to God; which arise from that Relation which he stands in to him. And as God gives Man Powers to discover the Relation which he stands in to himself, so must he will that he acts agreeable

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able to it; and make Happiness the Consequence.

Thus I have traced out the Heads of that Conduct of Man by which he is to obtain Happiness; that is, I have shew'd what Actions of Man are agreeable to the Belief of an eternal, intelligent, powerful, wise, good, just, &c. Being. And if there is really such a Being, who is the Author of Man's Existence, it is Demonstration that the Practice which I have been describing, is his Way to Happiness.

I call this Practice natural Religion, or Virtue.

And a contrary Behaviour, Vice.

And tho' that Part of our Duty which relates to ourselves, and other created Beings, is called Morality,

And that Part of it which immediately relates to God, is Piety, or is natural Religion properly so call'd; yet when we consider all our Duties as the Will of God, and that every Breach of Morality is Opposition to him, this also is a Part of natural Religion.

And now having, from the Attributes of God, traced out Man's Way to Happiness; having shewn what must be the Means to it, if God is just, and good, I proceed farther, and would examine how far Happiness is the Effect of the Practice which I have been describing, by the Order and Constitution of Things.

And 1st, We find that keeping our Powers unimpair'd, is a Means to Health and Chearfulness, and the great Pleasures of Thinking and

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Reasoning. And that on the contrary, all Intemperance produces Pain.

2. We find that there is a great natural Pleasure in the Esteem of Men; and this Pleasure Virtue secures to us; it not being in the Power of Man to disesteem Virtue, however he may be tempted to forsake it. On the other Side, Vice is sure to meet with Contempt; a Thing terrible to Man.

3. Doing no Injury to any, rendering to all their Dues, and doing Good, is a natural Means to the good Offices and Friendship of Men; and Self-love makes the just, the benevolent, the good, be beloved.

4. A Consciousness of Virtue fills us with pleasant Reflections, a Consciousness of Vice with painful ones. It is not in the Power of Man, as has been observed, to prefer Vice to Virtue, however he may be tempted to embrace the former, and abandon the latter. When, then, the Pleasure which invited to Vice ceases, and Man looks back on his past Conduct, a Consciousness that he has abused his Powers, acted unworthy of his Nature, and below other Beings, must fill him with Shame, Remorse, and Anguish. On the other Side, a Remembrance of Virtue, a Consciousness of having acted right, worthily, and according to the Dignity of his Nature, must give him Pleasure inexpressible.

5. We find ourselves capable of great Pleasure or Pain from Expectation; we hope, and fear, and apprehend Good or Evil before it arrives; and this Hope or Fear of Good and Evil,

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vil, is very much in Proportion to a Consciousness of deserving it. When, then, we are conscious that we have acted a righteous and a good Part; that we have done ill to no Man; and extended our Goodness to many; that we have join'd with our Maker in his great Work of doing Good, and that we resemble him, we are full of just Confidence and Expectation of Good from God and Man; we have a joyful Hope and Expectation of Happiness.

On the other Side, when we have injur'd and oppress'd; been malevolent, tyrannical, and unjust, and shut our Ears to the Cries of the Needy, we are full of Fear and Dread of Evil; have Shame and Anguish at looking backward, and Horror at looking forward.

We find then that the Practice which I have been describing, the Practice of Virtue, is naturally productive of Happiness.

But tho' thus it is according to the Constitution of Things, yet many are the Facts on the other Side; and frequently do we see

The Good and Evil, just and unjust, involved in the same Calamity; and no Man knoweth the one from the other, by that which befalleth them here.

Evil Men raise themselves to Prosperity, by Injustice, Cruelty, and Oppression.

They rise even upon the Miseries of the Good, and the Good perish by the Evil.

These are frequent Facts, and they put us upon searching farther into the Dispensations of God: For this we are never to depart from,
that

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that by Righteousness and Goodness shall Man obtain Happiness. This is as certain as the Attributes of God.

And we find, that if Virtue does not procure us Happiness in this World; if righteous and good Men are not happy; nor so in Proportion to their Desert; that this Life is not, cannot be Man's best and final State; but that he shall exist after the Dissolution of his Body, in order to future Happiness.

The Question then is, whether Happiness is always the Effect of Virtue in this World? Whether Happiness is constantly in Proportion to Righteousness and Goodness? If it is, then the Point, which I have been labouring, is yielded; Virtue is the Way to Happiness. If it is not, if Misery is sometimes the Portion of the Righteous and Good, a Fact few will dispute, then we are sure that Happiness is behind; that Man shall exist in a future State, when his present Sufferings shall be follow'd with great Felicity.

If Virtue has not its Effect in this World, we are sure that it shall have it; sure as we are that God is just and good, and always acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things.

And if Existence is only prolong'd to Man, and the Righteous and Good cease from suffering, and the Evil from oppressing, the former will be happy in their own Reflexions, and the latter miserable in theirs, without any positive Rewards or Punishments from God; tho' that

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there shall be Rewards and Punishments from him, is rational to expect.

As then God always wills Happiness to his Creatures, and acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things; has made Man capable of obtaining Happiness; as Virtue is the Way to Happiness; as the Virtuous are not always happy in this World, nor so in Proportion to their Virtue; it follows, that their Existence shall be prolong'd after the Dissolution of their Bodies, in order to their future Happiness.

We prove then Man's future Existence, from the Attributes of God, and the Miseries which often attend righteous and good Men in this World.

And as we prove Man's future Existence from the before-mention'd Particulars, so from a Consideration of the Nature and Powers of Man, we find it reasonable to expect it.

We cannot apprehend that Reasoning and Thinking are Properties of Matter, but of a different and superior Substance, having great Experience of the Properties of Matter, and never finding that it had any of this Sort; nay, as far as we know any Thing of Matter, it is utterly incapable of such Powers and Properties.

And if Reasoning and Thinking are not Properties of Matter, but of a different and superior Substance, then the Dissolution of a certain Composition of Matter, the ceasing to exist of the Body of Man, is no Reason why a different and superior Substance should cease to exist.

If

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If two Substances have the same Nature, Powers, and Properties, the Dissolution of the one gives us Reason to expect the Dissolution of the other; but if they have different Natures, Powers, and Properties, we have no Reason to apprehend that that which happens to the one, will also to the other. Nay, we have Reason to expect the contrary.

Lastly, It seems absurd to suppose that such Powers as Man is possess'd of, his Powers of Reasoning, Thinking, Judging, &c. should be given for so short a Time as the Life of Man, and to so little Purpose as only to procure a transient Pleasure.

It is rational then to expect Man's future Existence, from a Consideration of his Nature and Powers: But from the Goodness and Justice of God we depend on it; we depend that God will proportion Happiness to Virtue, and that the Judge of all the Earth will do right.

And now having from the Attributes of God proved that Man must be capable of obtaining Happiness, and that Virtue is the Means by which this Happiness is to be obtain'd; I proceed a Step farther, and prove that it shall be everlasting.

And I prove it from God's Goodness and Power.

God always wills Happiness to his Creatures.

Has Power to continue in Existence the Beings whom he has form'd.

Then he will always continue Existence to the Happy; and those who by a Right Use of their Powers

Enquiry after Happiness. 49

Powers have obtain'd Happiness, shall enjoy it to all Eternity.

Whether then the Virtuous obtain Happiness on this, or the other Side of the Grave, the Difference is but of small Importance to them; this is certain, they shall obtain it; and when it is obtain'd, they shall enjoy it to all Eternity.

Everlasting Happiness to the Righteous and Good, is a Consequence of God's Justice, Goodness and Power. If it is asked, Who is equal to the Task which I have set? Where is the Man who lives and falls not short of his Duty? I answer, God is no hard Taskmaster; he knew what we should be capable of before he form'd us; saw our necessary Failings and Imperfections, and would not have form'd us if we had not been capable of obtaining Happiness, notwithstanding these Failings and Imperfections. These then are not a Bar to our Happiness.

But so far as Man wilfully shuts his Eyes against his Duty; so far as he yields to present Pleasure in Opposition to Reason; so far as he is unjust, cruel, and tyrannical, a Spreader of Unhappiness; so far as he is malevolent, a Disposition hateful to God, and detested by him; that is, so far as he is an evil Being; so far, for any thing that I can find to the contrary, he must take the Consequence, and fall short of Happiness.

The most rational Method, after such Behaviour, most certainly is to be very sorry, and to ask God pardon for the Offence against him; and to be very diligent for the future;

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and

50 *Enquiry after a Revelation.*

and we hope God will forgive it; but still we cannot say that this Man is in the same Condition with him who has always walk'd uprightly. God may forgive him, but he hardly will approve of himself.



S E C T. VIII.

Enquiry the third, After a Revelation.

IS it rational to expect that God will reveal himself?

And this Enquiry is highly proper, previous to an Enquiry into the Evidence of a pretended Revelation; for, if it is not agreeable to the Attributes of God for him to reveal himself, a farther Search will be to no Purpose.

Now if we consider the Attributes of God abstractedly, there arises no Argument against a Revelation; and if it was not unworthy the divine Being to create, it appears not to be unworthy of him to direct, take care of, and govern.

Is there any Objection against a Revelation from a Consideration of the Nature of Man? Surely there appears none; we find Mankind, notwithstanding their Reason, often falling short of Happiness; ignorant of natural Duties, and of the Means to Happiness, or which is worse, and of much more fatal Consequence to them, not practising what they know.

And,

Enquiry after a Revelation. 51

And 1st, We find great Part of Mankind ignorant of several natural Duties, and of the Means to Happiness.

If we consider Mankind in the Beginning just come out of the Hands of their Maker, we shall find them (unless divinely instructed) entirely ignorant of almost all natural Duties, and of the Means to Happiness; without Reason to guide them, (there being no Reasoning before Experience) nor any Motives to act by but present Pain and Pleasure.

They must indifferently take either Good or Evil, having no Ideas or Notions of either, nor Instincts to direct them to what alone was good for them, nor to the Quantities, which would conduce to Health and Life.

They must learn Temperance by Excess; Truth by Error; and to search after the greatest Good, by experiencing that certain Degrees, or Kinds of present Pleasure produce Pain.

Such must be the Condition of Mankind at first, if left to themselves without a Revelation; their first Guides would be Pain and Pleasure, and these very insufficient ones; they could not lead them to all the Happiness which they were naturally capable of, nor so much as secure them from taking things immediately destructive to them.

2. After Mankind has had the Experience of their Forefathers to build their Conduct on, after some Knowledge has been transmitted to them from others, yet we find great Numbers not able by their own Powers to find out all

52 *Enquiry after a Revelation.*

natural Duties, and very few the great Motive (Eternal Happiness) to the Performance of them.

And 1st, Some want natural Abilities to discover all natural Duties. It is true, after Mankind has subsisted some Time, the Duties of Morality must lye obvious to very mean Capacities, if they will faithfully enquire after them; but so will not our immediate Duties to God; Fear may cause us to mistake the Deity, and consequently not to worship him in a Manner suitable to his Nature and Attributes.

2. Many that have Ability, yet want Opportunity to trace out all their natural Duties, and the Obligations to them. Great Part of Mankind are necessitated to get their Bread by the Sweat of their Brows, and have not Leisure to search after all that Knowledge which may be beneficial to them.

3. Multitudes are kept from Truth by the Craft of interested Deceivers. Such is the Misfortune of Mankind, that they have not been left to follow the Dictates of their own Reason, but have been led backward from Truth.

Religion in many Ages and Nations has been calculated to serve some private Views, and then imposed on Mankind as Divine. Morality has been corrupted, and the grossest Absurdities placed in its Room. This has been a most pernicious Blow to natural Religion, and to our Discovery of Truth by Reason.

It is evident then that if all Mankind have entirely been left to themselves without a Revelation, particularly if God did not reveal him-
self

Enquiry after a Revelation. 53

self to Mankind as soon as he had form'd them, some Part of them must have been ignorant of several natural Duties, and consequently must have fallen short of Happiness which they are naturally capable of.

It follows then, as there is no Objection against a Revelation from the Attributes of God consider'd abstractedly, so there is none from a Consideration of the Nature of Man; on the contrary, Instruction in our natural Duties, seems highly beneficial to Man, and on that Account from the divine Goodness we hope for it.

Particularly we hope, and trust, that God when he form'd Mankind did not leave them to grope in the Dark, in a worse Condition than the Brutes, who have Instincts to guide them to what alone is good for them, and never to Excesses in it; we hope that divine Wisdom supply'd Man's Want of Experience, and taught them their Way to Happiness.

And we will farther hope, that God who sees the many constant Impediments on Mankind to the Discovery of all their natural Duties; the Weaknesses of their Natures; the Necessities upon them to get their Bread by Labour; and the Prejudices which they lye under from the Impositions of Deceivers; either has interposed, or will interpose to guide them to Truth.

2. As Mankind often fail in another Particular, a Particular where a Failure is of much more fatal Consequence to them than a Want of Knowledge of their Duty, that is, in the Practice of it, we also in this Case hope for divine Assistance.

If

54 *Enquiry after a Revelation.*

If Man falls short in the Knowledge of his Duty, he loses a Happiness which he is naturally capable of, if in the Practice of what he knows, he exposes himself to the divine Displeasure, and to his own severe Reflexions lasting as his Existence. In the first Case he loses Happiness, in the second he procures to himself Misery.

As then it does not appear disagreeable to the Attributes of God for him to instruct Mankind in their natural Duties, neither does it to assist them in the Performance of them; to help them in a Case where a Failure is of most fatal Consequence to them.

Possibly God may make farther Manifestations of himself to faster bind Mankind to their Duty; he may give new Motives to our Obedience, find Means which may help to be a Security of our Virtue; or contrive Methods for our Happiness, which humane Reason cannot invent.

We cannot say God cannot, or will not do this or more; and as it does not appear unsuitable to his Nature for him to assist us, we from his Goodness hope that he will do it.

And now having found that a Revelation does not appear unsuitable to the Attributes of God, or Nature of Man; we should next proceed to examine into the Evidences of a pretended one, namely the Christian Religion, but first think it proper to consider what has been lately delivered by a considerable Writer, which if true, will overthrow what I have been advancing under the two last Particulars, which was,

That

Enquiry after a Revelation. 55

That if Mankind are entirely left to themselves without a Revelation, great Part of them must be ignorant of several Duties, and consequently fall short of Happiness which they are naturally capable of; and that it appears agreeable to the Attributes of God for him to instruct them in their natural Duties.

And, that there is no Argument from the Attributes of God, or Nature of Man, why God should not reveal to Mankind Truths not discoverable by humane Reason.

The Sum of what this Gentleman has advanced that seems to affect my Argument, follows.

That God has from * the Beginning given Mankind some *Rule, Law or Religion*, in the Observation of which they must obtain Happiness, or be acceptable to him.

That he has given all Men, at all Times, sufficient Means to know this *Rule, Law or Religion*.

That the *Law, Rule or Religion* cannot be more extensive than the Means of knowing it.

That the only Means of knowing this *Rule, Law or Religion* which has been given to all Men, is the Use of those Faculties by which they are distinguished from Brutes; and that the using these after the best Manner they can, must answer the End for which God gave them, and justify their Conduct.

That this *Law, Rule or Religion* is *perfect*.

That nothing can be added to it.

Now then as that only is a Perfect *Law, Rule,*

* Christianity as Old as the Creation, *Ch. 1. page 3, 4, 5.*

56 *Enquiry after a Revelation.*

or *Religion* which includes all the Means to Happiness, (for a *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, which does not include all the Means to Happiness is manifestly Imperfect, and may have something added to it by God, namely Means to more or greater Happiness, it being suitable to his Attributes to afford us Means to all possible Happinesses) according to this Gentleman (since the *Law* cannot be more extensive than the Means of knowing it) every Man can by the Use of those Faculties by which he is distinguish'd from the Brutes, obtain all the Happiness which he is naturally capable of, or which any Man is naturally capable of, and the *perfect Law*, *Rule* or *Religion*, includes nothing which every Man cannot perform.

And as the *Law*, *Rule* or *Religion*, measured by the natural Faculties of all Men, includes all the Means to Happiness, it follows that God will not reveal to Mankind * any natural Duties which all Men by their Reason cannot discover to be such; nor Truths undiscoverable by humane Reason.

In Answer then to this Gentleman, I say, that the *Law*, *Rule* or *Religion* measured by the Use which every Man is capable of making of those

* This first Conclusion, that God will not reveal to Mankind any natural Duties which all Men by their Reason cannot discover to be such, is not this Gentleman's: He supposes God may reveal to Mankind all natural Duties; but such a Supposal is inconsistent with the Perfection of the *Law*, *Rule* or *Religion*, given to all Mankind; and if the *Law*, &c. given to all Mankind is perfect, and can have nothing added to it, then God cannot reveal to Mankind any natural Duties not discoverable by the Reason of all Men.

Enquiry after a Revelation. 57

Faculties by which he is distinguish'd from Brutes; cannot be a *perfect Law, Rule, or Religion*, or secure to every Man all the Happiness he is naturally capable of, or which some Men are naturally capable of, unless we give up the Attributes of God.

For if the Creator of Man is a just, good, and powerful Being, and a Being who, in all his Actings with his Creatures, acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things, it demonstratively follows, that every Man has several Duties to himself, to God, and to Mankind, from the Performance of each of which must arise Happiness; that every Act of Temperance, Righteousness, Goodness, Piety, produces Happiness; that it recommends to God's Favour, and secures to us pleasant Reflexions lasting as our Existence.

It follows then, that the more our Duties are known and practis'd, the greater is our Happiness; and that where there is Ignorance of the Relation which we stand in to God, and Man, and of the Duties arising from thence; where there is not Knowledge to lead to all Actions of Temperance, Righteousness, Goodness, Piety, there must be a falling short of Happiness; at least of that Happiness which proceeds from a Reflexion on our Actions.

And, as it is undoubted Fact that some Men cannot by the Use of their natural Faculties obtain equal Knowledge of natural Duties, of Temperance, Righteousness, Goodness, Piety, with others, nor what themselves are capable of obtaining with Instruction, it follows, that they
I cannot

58 *Enquiry after a Revelation.*

cannot by the Use of their Faculties obtain equal Happiness with others, nor what themselves are naturally capable of obtaining.

If it is said, that what is the Duty of some Men, is not the Duty of others, it being impossible that can be any Man's Duty, which he has not Opportunity of knowing to be such; *but that *all have Knowledge sufficient for the Circumstances they are in.*

I answer, One of the Points I insist on is, that some Men, on account of greater Knowledge than others, have more Duties; but then I also insist, that if they have more Duties, they have a greater Capacity for Happiness, since that can be no Duty which does not produce Happiness.

All, in the Circumstances they are in, shall be capable of some Degree of Happiness; and no Man shall ever suffer, that is, receive Punishment, for not doing that which he had not Power to do: But all Men cannot by the Use of their Faculties obtain equal Happiness with others, it being impossible for those who never had it in their Thoughts to do certain Actions, to have all that Pleasure which naturally and necessarily attends the Performance of them.

It is evident then, that if the Creator of Man is a just, good, and powerful Being, and a Being who in all his Actings with his Creatures, acts according to Reason, and a Fitness of Things, that the *Law, Rule, or Religion* mea-

* Christianity as old as Creation, *ch. 1. p. 5.*

Enquiry after a Revelation. 59

sur'd by the Use which all Men are capable of making of those Faculties, by which they are distinguish'd from the Brutes, and which includes nothing which every Man with the meanest Capacity, and fewest Opportunities, cannot discover to be a Duty, (since the Law cannot be more extensive than the Means of knowing it) is a very imperfect *Law, Rule, or Religion.*

If yet the Justice of God should this Way be impeach'd for not letting all Men have equal Opportunities or Capacities for Happiness; for so constituting Things that some Men by the Use of their natural Powers cannot obtain that Happiness, which others are capable of obtaining by the Use of theirs, nor what themselves are capable of obtaining by Instruction: I return, it is undoubtedly certain, and a Consequence of God's Attributes, that he has constituted Things in the best possible Manner for the Good of the whole; but where Generations of Beings exist who are free Agents, there must be different Opportunities or Capacities for Happiness, since Vice naturally impairs the Powers and Faculties of Beings. And where there is not free Agency, there can be but a small Capacity for Happiness. And all that Happiness which arises to Man from God's Favour, and his own Reflexion on his Actions, proceeds from his being a free Agent.

We find then, upon a Review of our Argument, that all Mankind cannot by the Use of those Faculties which distinguish them from

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Brutes, obtain all that Happiness which they are naturally capable of, and that all have not equal Opportunities or Capacities for Happiness, and consequently, that the *Law, Rule, or Religion*, measured by the Use which every Man is capable of making of his Faculties, is an imperfect Law, Rule, or Religion; and that, as it is imperfect, it is suitable to the Attributes of God for him to add to it, and to reveal to Mankind all those natural Duties from the Practice of which they may obtain Happiness.

This Gentleman's Argument then, not overthrowing what I advanced in the first Place; proceed we to see how far it affects what I deliver'd in the second, which is,

That it does not appear disagreeable to the Attributes of God, for him to reveal to Mankind Truths not discoverable by humane Reason.

The Reason given by him why God will not reveal to Man any such Truths, is, because the *Rule, Law, or Religion*, which God has at all Times given to all Men, and is discoverable by the Use of those Faculties by which they are distinguish'd from Brutes, is *perfect*.

But we have proved that this *Rule, Law, or Religion*, is very imperfect; and that it does not include all the Means to Happiness.

There is, then, from hence, no Manner of Proof that God will not reveal to Mankind Truths not discoverable by humane Reason.

But

Enquiry after a Revelation. 61

But perhaps it will be said, that the *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, discoverable by humane Reason, though not by the Reason of every Man, is *perfect*; that this includes all the Means to Happiness, and can have nothing added to it.

But then I would ask the Proof of such an Assertion, and what Reason we have to think that this is a perfect *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*.

The Reason why the *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion* given to all Men, is *perfect*, will not prove that that which is only given to a few, is *perfect*.

And if it is suitable to the Attributes of God for him to reveal Truths which some Men by their Reason cannot discover, (as we have proved it is, and it will follow if we allow that God can at all reveal himself) why is it not suitable to his Attributes to reveal Truths which no Men by their Reason can discover? We cannot possibly say God cannot, or will not do this.

Having, then, no Manner of Proof that this is a perfect *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, we cannot conclude it to be such, and consequently cannot conclude that God will not reveal to Mankind Truths not discoverable by humane Reason; but must wait to see whether he does or not.

That an Observation of this Law will give us a high Degree of Happiness, is certain; but whether it is perfect, or imperfect, whether it does, or does not include all the Means to Happiness, we cannot possibly say, having no Evidence on either Side *a priori*.

God

62 *Enquiry after a Revelation.*

God may, for any Thing appears to the contrary, make Discoveries to Man that humane Reason could not have attained to, from whence may arise new Duties, and an Increase of Happiness; as also he may, seeing our Deviation from Reason, and the fatal Consequences of it to us, find Methods to engage us to our Duty, which Man could not have thought of; and he may give new Motives to our Obedience, or direct us to Means which may help to be a Security of our Virtue.

From a Remembrance then of our own Failings, and God's Goodness, we are inclin'd to hope for Assistance; but the Method of his assisting us it is impossible to discover.

Finding then, that the *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, discoverable by the natural Faculties of all Men, is an imperfect *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, that it does not include all the Means to Happiness;

And no Proof being offer'd why the *Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, discoverable by humane Reason, though not by the Reason of every Man, is a *perfect Law*, *Rule*, or *Religion*, it follows, that what this ingenious Gentleman has offer'd, will not overthrow what I advanced, which was,

That it does not appear disagreeable to the Attributes of God for him to reveal to Mankind their natural Duties; nor, to assist them in the Performance of them, or reveal to them Truths not discoverable by humane Reason.

Proceed

Enquiry after a Revelation. 63

Proceed we then, as we were going, to examine into the Christian Religion, and the Evidence of it.

Always remembering in our Search, a Caution which we set out with, and that is, not to receive any Thing as God's Word, which is not agreeable to his Nature or Attributes, whatever be the pretended Evidences of it.

Particularly, even our own Senses are to be distrusted when the Attributes of God are contradicted: For not these are so good Evidences to us of a transient Act, or Appearance of Things, as they are of God's Goodness, they being constant Evidences of this during our whole Existence.



S E C T. IX.

Enquiry the fourth.

WHAT Evidence have we that the Christian Religion is a divine Revelation?

And in the first Place, is it worthy of God, and suitable to his Nature, and agreeable to that Scheme of natural Religion which we have already founded on the Attributes of the Deity? If it fails here, if it contradicts the Attributes, we are not to receive it.

And

64 *Enquiry into the Evidence*

And in our Examination of this Point, we are to take in the whole Christian Scheme. And as the Christian Religion is founded upon one antecedent to it, namely, the Religion of the *Jews*, which it acknowledges to be divine, this also must be brought to the Test.

And here we find, according to this whole Religion, (considering both as making one) that Man was form'd happy, placed in a Seat of Felicity, yet being a free Agent liable to lose his Happiness.

And that God did not leave him to himself, but as soon as he had form'd him, kindly let him know the Terms on which he stood, how he would forfeit, and how preserve his Happiness.

That, notwithstanding Man had divine Instruction, yet he abused his Liberty, and suffer'd the Consequence. He sinn'd, and was excluded from the Seat of his Felicity, and consequently all Mankind was excluded from it with him.

That God did not suffer Mankind to remain in this Condition, to spend a few Years here in Labour and Sorrow, and then to return to the Earth from whence they were taken, but having lost their Happiness on Earth, he made them capable of Happiness in the Heavens.

And to the End they might not mistake their Duty, and fall short of Happiness, God himself vouchsafed to instruct them; he gave them divine Precepts; he sent to them Preachers of Righteousness; he warned them by Punishments on the Wicked, and by Deliverances of the Good; he saved a few righteous Persons when
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he destroyed the rest of the World; he gave a Law from Heaven writ on Tables of Stone, wherein was expressed our Duty to God and Man; and he sent a divine Person, his Son, to assume our Nature, and set us a perfect Example. And he accepts his perfect, for our imperfect Righteousness, provided we sincerely endeavour to do our Duty, and heartily repent of all our Offences against him.

Here is a Method for our Happiness, which human Reason could not have contrived, but worthy of the divine Being, and suitable to his Attributes. God will forgive us our Offences against him, for the Sake of the perfect Righteousness of *Jesus Christ*, provided we sincerely repent of them, and endeavour to do our Duty.

We before, from the divine Goodness, hop'd for Pardon, but Reason could give us no Assurances of it.

And to enable us to imitate the perfect Example of this our Saviour, he gave us a Rule for our Conduct, agreeable to what we had before discover'd from the Attributes, and to which if we faithfully attend, we cannot be mistaken in our Duty.

1. With regard to our selves, we are commanded to be temperate, sober, and chaste; every one to possess * *his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour*, and to flee youthful Lusts, which war against the Soul.

* 1 Theff. iv. 4.

66 *Enquiry into the Evidence*

2. With regard to others, we are commanded to invade the Rights of no Man; to *render^a to all their Dues*; are shown what are those Dues; and have a strait Rule given us, whereby to measure our Actions to all Mankind; and that is, to do to them^b as we would they should do to us.

And we are not only required to do no Injury, and to render unto all their Dues, but we are also commanded to do Good; told, that if we would be Disciples of our Master, and inherit the Blessing, we must be *merciful, kind, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving^c one another, even as God for Christ's Sake has forgiven us*; that, if we would be set at the Right Hand of our Saviour when he judges all Men, we must *feed the Hungry^d, cloath the Naked, visit the Sick, comfort the Fatherless, the Stranger, and the Widow*; that if we would have Treasure in Heaven, we must give to the Poor; and if we would be Children of the most High, we must resemble him who does Good to all, and maketh his^e Sun rise on the Evil, and the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and the Unjust.

And we are assur'd that unless the Motive to all our Charity be pure Benevolence, a sincere Delight in the Happiness of our Fellow Creatures, not even our^f whole Substance given to feed the Poor, will profit us any Thing.

^a Rom. xiii. 17.

^b Mat. vii. 12.

^c Eph. iv. 22, 23.

^d Mat. xxv. 34. to the End.

^e Mat. v. 45.

^f 1 Cor. xiii.

3. In this Religion the Attributes of the Deity which we had discover'd by Reason, are declar'd to us, and our Duty to God is delivered agreeable to these Attributes.

Here God is described an *eternal*^g, *unchangeable*^h, *almighty*ⁱ, *omnipresent*^k, *omniscient*^l, *wise*^m, *holy*ⁿ, *just*^o, *good*^p Being; we are commanded to *worship*, to *obey*, to *fear*, and to *love* him, and at all Times to trust in him. And we are instructed in the Times and Manner in which he will be worshipp'd.

Further, We have in this Religion Means for the Security of our Virtue.

A Sabbath, or one Day in seven, is appointed wherein we are to rest from our Labour, and remember God's Goodness in creating, and afterwards his Goodness in both creating and redeeming us.

Sacrifices and Ordinances are instituted under the *Jewish* Dispensation, by which that People were to be reminded of their Imperfections, their Sins, and their Dependency on the divine Being; and Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper under the *Christian*, in the one of which we are solemnly initiated into our Religion, made Members of *Christ's* Church; and in the other we commemorate the Love of our

^g Deut. xxxiii. 27. ^h Mat. iii. 6. James i. 17. ⁱ Gen. xvii. 1. xxviii. 3. xxxv. 11, &c. ^k Psalm cxxxix. Prov. v. 21. xv. 3. Heb. iv. 13, &c. ^l Job xlii. 2. Psalm cxxxix, &c. ^m Psalm cxlvii. 5. Rom. xi. 33. ⁿ If. lvii. 15. Psalm xcix. 3. & ciii. 1. & cxlv. 21, &c. cxi. 9. & Rev. xlix. ^o If. xlv. 21. Zeph. iii. 5. Deut. xvi. 18. Prov. xvi. 11. Psalm lxxxix. 14. ^p 1 Chron. xvi. 34. Ezra iii. 11. Psalm c. 5. cvi. 1. cvii. 1.

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Saviour, testify our selves to be his Disciples, receive Pardon of our Sins, and repeat our Professions of conforming to his Laws.

Lastly, We are assured that the Soul of Man, his thinking Part, never dies, and that eternal Misery will be the Portion of Vice, as well as eternal Happiness of Virtue; that the *Unclean*, the *Extortioners*, and *Unjust**, those who *shut their Ears to the Cries of the Needy*, shall go away into everlasting Misery, but the *Righteous into Life eternal*†.

From a Consideration of the Nature of the Soul of Man, its Powers, and Properties, we found it reasonable to conclude it not material, but of a Substance distinct from, superior to, and more durable than the Body of Man; and that it should be form'd for perpetual Existence, is agreeable to Reason; and if so, then it follows, that when it is conscious that it has abus'd its Powers, acted unsuitably to its Nature, and below other Beings, it will have painful Reflections during its Existence.

This Religion, then, appearing worthy of God, and suitable to his Nature, the next Question is, What is the Evidence of it? For it will not follow that because it is worthy of God, it is his Revelation, but it will follow, that it is rational for us to proceed in our Enquiry.

We proceed then, to an Examination of the Evidence of the Christian Religion, and in

* Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

† Mat. xxv. 46.

order to judge of it, think it first proper to consider what kind of Evidence is to be expected; and supposing God would reveal himself, what Proof may we rationally expect him to give us of such a Revelation?

This is certain, if the Revelation is for the Benefit of all Mankind, and ought to be received as Truth by all those to whom it is communicated, the Evidence of it should be sufficient to determine the rational Assent of all those to whom it is communicated, as well those who live after, as at the Time when such a Revelation is given. The Christian Religion, then, being of this Sort, (for the Benefit of all Mankind, and requiring Belief from all those to whom it is communicated) it ought to have such an Evidence, as is sufficient to determine the rational Assent of all Men.

Now then, we can think of no Evidence so certain to all Mankind, as that which is given in the Works of Nature; and it is reasonable to expect that the supreme Being should give Mankind Evidence of his Will, after the same Manner as he gave them Evidence of his Existence and Attributes, that is, in his Works. And as he led us to a Knowledge of his Being, or gave us Evidence of his Being, by the Works of Nature; so we may justly expect he would give us Evidence of his Will in the same Works, and by shewing his Power in Nature. And how is it that the supreme Being can give us Evidence of his Will in the Works of Nature? Why, as the Existence of Things, and the constant, regular, uniform

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uniform Laws by which Bodies move or rest, are a Proof of an *eternal, intelligent, &c.* Being; so a Change in these Laws would be an Evidence of his Will; and as no Being can change his Laws, he being sole Lord of Nature, without his Consent, and as he cannot consent they should be chang'd to give Evidence to Falshood, (for that would be to act in Opposition to his own Will) it follows, that a Change in these Laws is full Evidence that what is deliver'd, came from him.

We call a Change in the Laws of Nature, a Miracle.

Now then, as it is rational to expect this Evidence of a Revelation, so we find this is the Evidence pretended by those who would press on us the Christian Religion: We are then to examine, whether the Christian Religion has this Evidence or not. And in this Search we ought to be very careful, it being certain that if this is the Evidence to be expected, this is the Evidence that Counterfeits will pretend to be in Possession of.

In order then, to find whether the Laws of Nature were chang'd at the Promulgation of the Christian Religion, we are to examine,

1. Whether the pretended Facts are Changes in the Laws of Nature.

2. Whether there really ever were such Facts.

Now to know whether the pretended Facts are really Changes in the Laws of Nature, we must explain what we mean by the *Laws of Nature*.

That

That constant, regular, uniform Way, by which Bodies are determin'd to Motion or Rest, and the constant, regular Connexions betwixt certain known Causes and Effects, we call Laws of Nature. And when certain Bodies at Rest, move without any external Force; when certain Bodies in Motion, move in a different Manner from what they were ever known to move; when certain known Causes produce different Effects, from what they have been ever known to produce; different from what themselves can produce the next Moment, and different from what all others of a like Nature with themselves ever can produce; then we may justly and properly say that the Laws of Nature are chang'd; that something is effected which could not be effected naturally.

A Miracle then being a Change in the Laws of Nature, in order to know that there is really a Miracle, 'tis necessary first to know the Laws of Nature; and it is impossible to prove the Laws of Nature are chang'd, unless we first know what are these Laws. Particularly, should we see a new Appearance in the Heavens, we could not say that the Laws of Nature were chang'd; we know not all Nature, nor all the Laws or Powers of Bodies; and this might be a constant, regular Effect of a certain Cause, for any Thing we can say to the contrary. And Time may bring us to a Knowledge of the Cause of this Effect, as it has to a Knowledge of the Cause of Eclipses, which have been, and perhaps

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haps yet may in some Places be ignorantly reputed Miracles.

It is evident then, that we must be fully acquainted with the constant, regular, uniform Determination of certain Bodies; the constant, regular Connexions betwixt certain known Causes and Effects; the Powers of certain Causes to produce certain Effects, and their natural Inability to produce certain other Effects, before we can say that the Laws of Nature are changed; that there is not a natural Connexion betwixt Cause and Effect, that is, that there is a Miracle.

Those who carry this Matter farther, and say we know not all the Laws of Nature, the Laws and Powers of Bodies, and consequently cannot say that ever the Laws of Nature are chang'd, argue not justly. It is not necessary that I know all the Laws of Nature, nor even all the Laws and Powers of any one Body, nor all the Effects of certain Causes, to say that the Laws of Nature are chang'd. There may be many Powers in Bodies, and even in those which we are most acquainted with, yet undiscovered; and there may be many Effects not known by us, which may proceed from certain Causes: But then all Bodies of the same Nature will be moved by the same Laws, and the same Causes will regularly and constantly produce the same Effects. But when Bodies move contrary to those Laws, by which all Bodies of the same Nature move, and contrary to those by which them-

selves

selves have hitherto moved; and when certain known Causes produce new Effects in single Instances, and such Effects in which naturally there is no Connexion betwixt Cause and Effect; then we may justly say that the Laws of Nature are changed. And now having seen what is a Change in the Laws of Nature, and that such a Change is the Evidence to be expected of a Revelation, we proceed to examine the pretended Facts, and to see whether these were Changes in the Laws of Nature.

And no sooner do we examine, but we find the pretended Facts given in Evidence of the Christian Religion, are of this Sort; and allowing the Facts, they are really Changes in the Laws of Nature.

To instance, The Laws of Nature were changed, when the *Sick, Lame, Wither'd, Blind, Deaf, Dumb*, were cured of all those Maladies by the speaking of a Word, by the touching of Clothes, or by an Ointment made of Spittle and Clay; here was no natural Connexion betwixt Cause and Effect, a Word, a Touch, Spittle and Clay will not naturally, by any Power of their own, restore Health, Limbs, Eyes.

The Laws of Nature were chang'd, when *Peter* walk'd upon the Sea; the Sea will by no Power of its own support walking Persons, and in that Instance acquired a new Power.

The Laws of Nature were chang'd, when *Jesus* rais'd *Lazarus* from the Dead by the speaking of a Word; a Word will not natu-
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rally restore Life, nor do we know any Cause, except the divine Power, equal to that Effect.

The Laws of Nature were chang'd, when *Jesus* shew'd himself alive after his Crucifixion.

The Laws of Nature were chang'd, when Persons spoke Languages they never learnt.

But I need not instance farther; it is very evident, that if there really ever were such Facts as these above-mention'd, they were Changes in the Laws of Nature. We proceed then to the next Thing to be enquired after, which is, What is our Evidence of the Facts?

In the first Place, then, we are to consider, What is the Evidence to be expected? Now a Miracle being a Change in the Laws of Nature, it must be of the Essence of a Miracle, that is to give Evidence, not to be frequent. The Reason is, we know nothing of the Laws of Nature *à priori*; and our whole Knowledge of these Laws must arise from long Observation and Experience, from seeing the constant, regular, uniform Determinations of Bodies, the Powers of certain Causes to produce certain Effects, and the Inability of such Causes to produce certain other Effects. Had we not then a long Experience of the constant regular Determinations of Bodies, Powers of Causes, &c. we could say nothing of a Miracle. And were Interruptions to the Laws of Nature frequent, we could not tell what were the Laws of Nature; and consequently could not say that these Interruptions

tions were Miracles. (By the Way we may remark, that if God would reveal himself to Man soon after he had created him, Miracles would not then be an Evidence to him of a Revelation; and if the supreme Being would early communicate his Mind to Man, he must do it by Vision and immediate Speaking to him. And as this was the Way according to the Christian Scheme, that God did at first communicate his Will to Man, it reflects Credit upon that Scheme.)

It is plain then, that 'tis of the very Essence of a Miracle, that is to give Evidence, not to be frequent; and if so, then historical Evidence is all the Evidence that some Persons can ever have, that there really were any Miracles. The Question then is, whether we have this Evidence? Whether we have Reason to believe that the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles is a true History; that the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to this History, had full Knowledge of what they relate and bear Testimony to. And

I. Were not deceived themselves.

II. Were Men of Integrity, and did not deceive others.

In the first Place, if Persons relate and bear Testimony to a History of Facts, and pretend to be themselves present at, Eye-witnesses of, and concern'd in, those Facts, and if the pretended Facts are of such a Nature as to have lasting, visible Effects; then it is Demonstration that such Persons must have full Knowledge

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whether there ever were, or were not such Facts, and consequently could not possibly be deceived themselves.

2. If the same Persons have been never known to falsify, or deceive in other Instances; if they have no Blot in their Characters; and to deceive us in this Instance is entirely contrary to their Interest; then we have Reason to think they do not deceive us in it, but faithfully relate what they have Knowledge of.

We are then, in the first Place, to examine whether the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, pretend to be themselves present at, Eye-witnesses of, and concern'd in, the Facts which they relate, and bear Testimony to, and whether the pretended Facts had such lasting visible Effects, that they could not possibly be mistaken concerning them, nor deceiv'd themselves.

And here we find that these Persons do actually pretend to be themselves present at, concern'd in, and Eye-witnesses of, the Facts which they relate and bear Testimony to; and the pretended Facts had lasting, visible Effects; so that they could not possibly be deceived themselves, and not know whether there ever were, or were not such Facts.

Thus *Matthew* and *John* give us a History of Facts, and pretend to be themselves present at, concern'd in, and Eye-witnesses of, those Facts; and the pretended Facts had lasting, visible Effects; it is evident, then, that these Persons must have

have full Knowledge whether there ever were, or were not, such Facts.

Again, two other Historians, called *Mark* and *Luke*, give us the same History; and *Luke* besides, publishes another History of Facts, in which, *Peter, James, John, Paul*, and other Disciples of *Jesus*, were the chief Actors. This Account he publishes, whilst these Persons were yet alive, and must have denied the Facts, if there had been no such, or themselves not Parties in the Imposture.

Further, Tho' *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, and *John*, only were the direct Historians of the Life and Actions of *Jesus* and his Apostles, yet *Peter, James, John*, and *Jude*, according to the Relation of the above-named Historians, were constant Attenders of *Jesus*; and these Persons themselves refer to the related Facts, in their several Epistles to different Churches; and the whole that they write is grounded upon a Supposition of the Facts.

We must reckon, then, as Attesters of the History of *Jesus, Matthew, John, Peter, James, Jude, Mark, Luke*; the five first of which pretend to be themselves present at, Eye-witnesses of, and concern'd in, the Facts which they relate, and bear Testimony to; and Attesters of the History of the Apostles, *Luke, Peter, James, John*, and *Paul*.

And as one Part of the *Christian History* depends on the other Part of it, and *Jesus's* Disciples, according to their own Account of Things, acted by his Authority and Commission,
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it is evident, that if they did not the Actions which they pretend they did, neither did He the Actions which they ascribe unto him; and if he did not the Actions which they ascribe to him, neither did they the Actions which they pretend they did; but it is impossible for Persons to be deceiv'd in their own Case, and not know whether they really do, or do not make the Lame walk, the Blind see, the Dead come to Life, &c. consequently all these Persons must be grand Cheats if there were no such Facts.

As to the common Objection of Enthusiasm, it can have no Weight here, the Things testify'd by these Persons, being of that Nature, that they could not possibly be deceiv'd concerning them: And though a warm Imagination may be so far impos'd on, as to apprehend Visions and Revelations when there are really no such Things; yet no Persons in their Senses, no Persons who can deliver to the World a consistent Scheme of Morality, can be so far deceived, as to imagine that they make the Blind see, the Lame walk, the Dead come to Life, or that they speak in Languages which they never learnt, if there were no such Facts.

It is then beyond Contradiction evident, that the Persons who relate, and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, had full Knowledge whether there ever were, or were not such Facts as they relate and bear Testimony to, and consequently were not deceiv'd themselves. The next Thing then to be enquir'd after, is,

Illy, If

Illy, If they were ever known to falsify or deceive in any one Instance; and if it was contrary to their Interest to deceive.

1. In the first Place, then, they were never known to falsify or deceive in any one Instance; they had no Blot in their Characters; and their very worst Enemies could not reproach them with Immorality.

2dly, It was against their Interest to deceive.

That to deceive, was contrary to their Interest in this World, is evident, because Persecution and Death were the Consequence of the Imposture, if it was one. And that it was contrary to all future Prospects is evident, because it is not possible for human Nature to have so absurd Notions of the Deity, as that his Favour is to be purchas'd by inventing a Lie, and persevering in it. Possibly, indeed, Persons may have lied for God, that is, they may have supported a Cause which they apprehended to be his, with Falshood; but then, they thought it was really his Cause; and no Body has been so absurd as to imagine, that the Favour of the Deity is to be purchas'd by inventing a Lie concerning Him, by asserting that to be his Cause, which they certainly know to be not so; which is lying not for, but against, in Opposition to Him.

If it be said, That though it is true these Persons acted contrary to worldly Interest, yet they might have another Notion of Things at first, and that particularly *Jesus*, the Ring-leader of this Sect, design'd making himself a King; and that

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that after his Decease his Disciples acted upon the same worldly Motives. I answer, It no where appears that *Jesus* design'd making himself a King; on the contrary, He constantly disclaim'd whatever tended that Way, and declar'd that his Kingdom *was not of this World*. And as to his Disciples, whatever Notion they at first might have of worldly Advancement, yet the repeated Declarations of their Master, his ignominious Death and Sufferings, and their own cruel Treatment in the World, fully appriz'd them of what they were to expect on Earth, and that *Bonds, Persecution, Hatred of all Men, and Death*, were to be the only Portions they were in this World to expect.

Again, What View to worldly Advancement had *Paul*, a learned and ingenious Man, in good Repute in his own Nation, and who well knew what Fate the Spreaders of *Christianity* were to expect, from the Part he had acted towards them?

But to put this Matter out of Question, whatever Prospect of worldly Interest Persons may have living, they can have none dying: These Persons seal'd their Testimony with their Blood, and laid down their Lives to confirm the Truth of what they deliver'd.

Now the Question is, What could make them behave after this Manner? Our Reasoners tell us, That every Effect must have a necessary Cause, and a Cause suited to the Effect. Let them then tell us what is the necessary Cause of this Effect, and what could be the Motive to so many

Persons to suffer not only Persecution, but Death, for the Sake of a known Falshood. Here they renounce Earth; and if they have a Thought of Heaven, they renounce this too. In this Case they must chuse Pain, as Pain, and renounce Pleasure as such; which yet it will not be allow'd that any Man is capable of doing.

If it be said that they were Atheistical Persons, disbeliev'd a God, and consequently had no future Prospects; then I ask, What made them renounce this World? If it be said they believ'd a God, and their own future Existence, then I demand how they came to renounce his Favour for nothing; how they came knowingly and purposely to purchase Misery in the next World, with Misery in this?

If it be yet objected, That after they had once published their Story, (whatever was their Motive of doing it) Pride made them resolutely adhere to it. I answer, When we argue that a certain Behaviour is the Effect of Pride, we should either shew from the Nature of Pride that it may have such an Effect, or give Examples where there really has been such Pride in the World. But if we can do neither of these, (as most certainly in the present Case we cannot) then we cannot argue that the Behaviour of these Persons was the Effect of Pride.

It is true that many Persons have laid down their Lives for erroneous Opinions, but then it must be remembred, that these suffer'd for Error as Truth; but we find no Instances where several Persons have agreed to lay down their

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Lives

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Lives to maintain a known Cheat and Falshood, without any Prospect of Interest or Gratification to themselves. Criminals will die with a Lie in their Mouth, but it is in Hopes of saving their Lives, their Reputations, or Estates; and they don't persevere in a Cheat, without a Motive to it.

And what yet strengthens the Evidence that these Persons were not Deceivers, is the great Number of them; and if it is irrational to think that one Person would lay down his Life to maintain a known Falshood, it is yet more irrational to think that many Persons should agree to do it; that they should be true to Falshood, and to each other. And indeed considering the Nature of Mankind, their Desire of Life, Aversion to Pain, and Love of Pleasure, 'tis no less than Demonstration that these Persons did not die to maintain a known Cheat.

To conclude this Head, No greater Evidence can be given of any Proposition, than the Nature of that Proposition will admit; and when a Proposition has the highest Evidence that can be given to it, it ought to be receiv'd as Truth, or all Propositions of the same Nature that have only the same, or a less Evidence, to be rejected as Falshood. No higher Evidence can be given that any Persons are Persons of Integrity, and do not deceive us, than we have that those who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, are Men of Integrity, and do not deceive us. Consequently we cannot rationally

tionally receive any History, and reject that which they deliver'd to us.

As to the Point, Whether those who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, did give this Evidence of their Integrity, and lay down their Lives for the Sake of what they deliver'd; this is out of Question with all: And the Sufferings and Death of the Founders of *Christianity*, was so open, and publick, so circumstantiated, has suffer'd so many Reproaches, and stands in so many Records, that the greatest Opposers of this Religion have not been hardy enough to deny it: And it can no more be doubted, that the Founders of *Christianity* suffer'd and died for it, than it can be doubted whether there were such Emperors as *Tiberius*, *Nero*, *Trajan*, &c. in whose Times they suffer'd, &c.

We have then the highest Evidence the Nature of the Proposition will admit, that the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, had full Knowledge of what they relate and bear Testimony to, and were not deceiv'd themselves; and also that they were Men of Integrity, and did not deceive others. Then it follows, that the History which they deliver'd ought to be receiv'd as a true one.

But farther, We have not only the Testimony of these Persons for the Truth of the Facts, but we have likewise other collateral Evidence and Circumstances.

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Thus those who dispute about the Facts, and pretend that they were not true Miracles, acknowledge the Facts.

Those who ascribe them to diabolical Power, acknowledge the Facts; here then is the Testimony of Enemies.

Again, The pretended Facts were of such a Nature, and had such lasting visible Effects, that every Body who lived at the Time when they were pretended to be done, had Opportunity to inform themselves concerning the Truth of them. Thus the meanest Person, if he had not himself been present, might easily have inform'd himself whether *Jesus* open'd the Eyes of the Blind; rais'd *Lazarus* from the Dead; and whether *Peter* and *John* had made a Cripple, who had lain a long Time at the Gate of the Temple, walk. They might have had the Testimony of a Thousand People, if they had not had that of their own Eyes, that one had been blind, another lame; and could themselves examine how far these Cures were wrought, and if *Lazarus* had been dead, and was then alive.

And since it is of the Essence of a Miracle that is to be an *Evidence* to us, that the Laws of Nature be chang'd in such Instances, where we have a full Knowledge of the Laws of Nature, it is evident that Cheats are liable to be discover'd; and the most illiterate Person knows the Laws and Powers of some Bodies, and Causes; particularly, he knows that Spittle and Clay will not open the Eyes of the Blind; nor the speaking of a Word raise the Dead to Life, consequently

sequently has it in his Power to examine whether there be a Miracle or not.

Again, The great Number of Converts to *Christianity* in the Time of the Apostles, is an Evidence of the Facts.

That there were a vast Number of these early Converts, is by none disputed; and it is incredible that so many Persons should embark in a Religion contrary to all worldly Interest, if they had not thoroughly examin'd the Facts on which this Religion was founded. True, vast Numbers of Converts have been made to false Religions, but with this Difference from the present Case; these Religions had the Support of worldly Power, and the embracing of them suited worldly Interest. But there are no Instances, where a vast Number of Persons embark'd in a Religion contrary to both these; a Religion which propos'd no other worldly Preferment to its Followers, than Bonds, Stripes, and Death; which gave no Relief from *Persecution in one City*, but *Flight into another*; and which stood charg'd with this frightful Motto, *Take up your Cross and follow me*. It could be only the Evidence of this Religion, which made so many Persons engage in it under such disadvantageous Circumstances.

Again, No Instances of Cheat or Imposture being found with regard to the pretended Facts, it is an Evidence on the Side of the Facts.

We do not say, that the not discovering of a Cheat, is an Evidence that there is no such;
for

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for then it would follow, that there could be no such Thing as a Cheat undiscovered; but we say, and justly, that when many Persons are engaged to search out a Cheat, their not finding any is a probable Argument that there is none to find.

Here was the Jew, to the last Degree tenacious of his Law and Modes of Worship, which every Day were losing ground by the increase of Christianity; the new Converts, whose Discovery of a Fraud would have restored them again to the World, and whatever was dear in it; and the Pagan, utter Enemy to the setting up of what he call'd New Gods; all endeavouring to detect the Imposture. One Argument for the Facts then is, they stood the Examination of a vast Number of Persons, whose Interest it was to detect them.

Lastly, considering the selfish, and worldly Views of all Impostors, and the corrupted State of natural Religion at the Time when the Gospel was deliver'd, it seems utterly impossible that this Gospel should come from such Persons.

This is certain, Impostors have always worldly and selfish Views when they endeavour to impose on Mankind. And the particular Motives to the Deceits of every Impostor, who has yet appear'd in the World, may be traced out *à posteriori* from his Religion.

But from the Religion given us by *Jesus* and his Apostles, no worldly, or selfish Views are

to be traced out in its Founders. All is agreeable to the divine Attributes; and from the End of this Religion, its Doctrine and Precepts, we ascend to the divine Wisdom and Goodness, the only Causes that appear equal to such an Effect.

And when we consider how illiterate these Persons were; how low their Station in the World; and their Want of Opportunities to deceive; this Argument will receive farther Weight.

Again, a Consideration of the corrupted State of natural Religion at the Time when the Gospel was deliver'd, gives us farther Reason to believe that this Gospel came from God.

The Teachers amongst the Jews had very much corrupted natural Religion by their Traditions. They laid a great Stress on the Ceremonials of the Law, and neglected that, for which alone the Ceremonials were instituted. They made a Gift to God stand in the room of their natural Duty to their Parents; and a punctual Payment of Tithe in Trifles, excuse a Neglect of the weightier Matters of the Law, *Judgment, Justice, and Mercy.*

Thus stood the Case with the Teachers: How then must it be with the Taught? Could the Illiterate, when their natural Notions were corrupted, when led backward from Truth, understand more than those who sat in *Moses's* Chair? This can hardly be thought possible. Consider the State of the Jews, when *Jesus* appear'd, and read the Sermon on the Mount, and then judge whether

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whether this was the Performance of a Man, who had all his Teaching from the Scribes and Pharisees.

We have then the highest historical Evidence, which is all the Evidence we possibly can have in the present Case, of the Truth of the pretended Facts; and we must, if we are consistent with ourselves, either receive this Evidence, and acknowledge the Facts, or receive no historical Evidence, and acknowledge no Facts but what ourselves are Witnesses of.

I now but put the Christian History, as to Evidence, equal with other Histories, which we every Day receive as true ones, and act upon the Supposition of their being such; but we may fairly carry the Argument farther, and say, that we have no History which has such Testimony, which was deliver'd, and witnessed by so many Persons, present at, and concern'd in the Facts which they deliver, and bear Testimony to; and where the Historians and Witnesses gave such Evidences of their Integrity; and which besides is confirm'd by so many collateral Evidences.



S E C T. X.

SO far then the Christian Religion is right as to the Matter which it contains, and as to the Manner in which it is deliver'd; it at present stands worthy of God, and is supported by the best Historical Evidence; but still we find

Objections against it, which come now to be consider'd.

And *First*, it is objected that *Jesus*, the Author of of this Religion pretends to be prophesied of in the *Jewish* Books; that he says, the *Scriptures* * *testify of him*, that *Moses* † *wrote of him*, that had the *Jews* believed *Moses*, they would have believed him, for he wrote of him; but, that it does not appear that the *Scriptures* testify of him, that *Moses* wrote of him: Consequently he is an Impostor.

Now then, we so far agree with the Objector, as to acknowledge that *Jesus* pretends to be prophesied of in the *Jewish* Books; and that if it appears, that these Books do not foretel him he is not to be received as a Teacher from God. We proceed then to examine this Point, whether he is really foretold in the *Jewish* Books or not; and in order to it must a little consider the Nature, End, and Evidence of Prophecy.

When the divine Being, by the Mouth of a Person is pleased to foretel future Events, the foretold Events are call'd Prophecies, and the Person who foretels them a Prophet.

If the divine Being is pleased to instruct a Person to foretel future Events, that is, to prophecy, it is for some good End, either for the Sake of the Generation when the Prophecies are deliver'd, or that when they shall be fulfill'd.

* John v. 39.

† John v. 46.

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If Prophecies are design'd for the Sake of the Generation when they are deliver'd, then must the Evidence of them attend their Delivery, and God give his People Assurance, that what is then spoken shall surely come to pass. As thus, if God designs to comfort a Nation in Distress, or Sorrow, by foretelling future Ease and Deliverance to them, or their Posterity; then does he give that People Assurance that the Things promised or foretold shall certainly come to pass.

If Prophecies are design'd for the Sake of the Generation when they shall be fulfill'd, then must the Evidence of them attend their Completion, and the Event agreeing with antecedent Descriptions of it, must give Evidence to those Descriptions that they came from God, and that it was by him that the Event was foretold.

Now, though all future Events can only be known, or foretold by God, yet it will not follow that all Events which agree with antecedent Descriptions of them, give those Descriptions the Evidence of Prophecy. Many Persons from a Knowledge of Causes, may foretel future Events; not certainly, because there are future Contingences which no Man can foresee, but probably, and what they foretel frequently comes to pass; and also antecedent Descriptions of Events, when it is in humane Power to fulfil them, may come to pass from a Belief that they are Prophecies; the Actions of Men being greatly affected by their Imaginations, and a Belief

lief that a Thing will arrive, being often a Means to make it do so; or, they may come to pass from a Desire to have them received as Prophecies; and Persons may fulfil them, because they would be accounted to be foretold by God.

But though these are Cases in which an Event agreeing with an antecedent Description of it will not give Evidence to that Description that it came from God, yet in many others it will, and particularly, it will in the following ones.

First, If the Event foretold depends not on natural Causes, but comes to pass contrary to the Course of Nature, we are sure that the foretelling of it was Prophecy: For as no Being can change the Laws of Nature but the Lord of it, so can no Being foretel these Changes but him. In this Case there is the highest Evidence of Prophecy.

Secondly, If the Event foretold depends on natural Causes, yet if foretold long before it arrives, and it is not in humane Power upon a Knowledge of the antecedent Declaration to bring it to pass; then that antecedent Declaration is to be look'd on as a Prophecy, since no Being but him who was the Framers of Nature, and who gave to all Beings, and Things Existence, can foresee a Train of Events to come, and what shall be brought to pass according to the Course of Nature.

Thirdly, If foretold Events depend on natural Causes, and it is in humane Power to fulfil them,

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them, yet if the Time for those Events is limited, and the Persons who fulfil them are ignorant of them, then the foretelling such Events is to be received as Prophecy: Future Times, and Seasons, and the Order of Events to come, being only known to him who appointed Successions of Events, and allotted to every Thing that exists, its Duration, and particular Place in the Succession of Beings or Things.

Fourthly, If several Events are foretold which concur, and suit with each other, in order to some visible End or Design, the foretelling such Events must be acknowledg'd to be Prophecy; since that Being alone who framed, and fitted Beings, and Things to each other, in order to the Preservation or Happiness of the whole System of created Beings, can foretel concurring Events.

And now having a little consider'd the Nature, End, and Evidence of Prophecy; and given some Instances, wherein Events give Evidence to antecedent Descriptions of them that they came from God, we proceed to see whether *Jesus* makes out his Claim, and fulfils Prophecies.

And *First*, we are to observe that as Prophecy may be given for the Sake of the Generation when it is deliver'd, as well as for that when it shall be fulfill'd, it follows that if *Jesus* only answers Descriptions in the *Jewish* Books, though such as consider'd singly would receive no Evidence from their Completion, he makes out his Claim to Gentile as well as Jew, and ought to be receiv'd by both, as that Person he pretended to be.

The

The Case is, he had the Evidence of Miracle and wanted no other; but he must answer antecedent Descriptions in the *Jewish* Books, because he says he does; if then he answers such Descriptions, his Evidence from his Miracles is in full Force, and on their Account alone he ought to be received as a Teacher from God by all Men.

Secondly, If he answers Descriptions in the *Jewish* Books, though such as consider'd singly would receive no Evidence of coming from God from their Completion, yet then has he to the *Jews*, who acknowledge these Descriptions divine, the Evidence of Prophecy.

For, as these Descriptions must belong to that Person whom they suit, if the *Jews* acknowledge they are Prophecies, then they also must acknowledge the Person who fulfils them foretold by God.

Thirdly, If he answers antecedent Descriptions, which receive Evidence that they came from God, from their Completion, then has he the Evidence of Prophecy to all Men; and if that which is foretold concerning him be above the Power of Nature, then has he the highest Evidence of Prophecy.

And now having given some Instances in which *Jesus* must be allow'd to make out his Claim, we proceed to examine whether he does really make it out; that is, we proceed to an Examination of the *Jewish* Books, and as he particularly claims to be foretold by *Moses*, *Moses* we will in the *first* Place examine.

And

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And here we find that *Moses* declares that
 a Prophet shall arise with these Characters,
A Man raised up amidst his Brethren^a.
And like unto^b Moses.

That he should have this Office, to be in the
 Place of God, and speak the Words of his
 Mouth: *I will^c put my Words into his Mouth,*
and he shall speak unto them all that I shall
command him.

And also that a Punishment should attend the
 not hearkening to him, *And it shall^d come to*
pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my
Words which he shall speak in my Name, I will
require it of him.

And that the Evidence which should be given
 him whereby the People should know that what
 he spake was really the Words of God, should
 be this, speaking in the Name of the Lord, and
 having the Thing which he speaks follow and
 come to pass. *When a Prophet^e speaketh in*
the Name of the Lord, if the Thing follow not,
nor come to pass, that is the Word which the
Lord hath not spoken.

We are then to observe concerning this Pro-
 phet.

1. That he was to deliver something of
 great Importance, what he was to deliver be-
 ing called the *Words of God's Mouth*, and a Pe-
 nalty being annex'd to the not hearkening
 to it.

^a Deut. xviii. 15.
^d —xviii. 19.

^b —xviii. 15.
^e —xviii. 22.

^c —xviii. 18.

2. That a particular Evidence was to be given to him.

3. That the particular Evidence to be given him was to be given for a particular End and Intent, namely, as a Mark by which the People should know that what had been delivered to them by this Prophet was really the Words of God. *And if thou say * in thy Heart, How shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, &c.*

4. That something new, something which had not been delivered before, was to be delivered by this Prophet, there being no need of any particular Evidence, or any Evidence at all to be given to what had been before delivered by *Moses*; this having already had the Evidence of Miracle. Neither would the People ask, or God promise to give any more Evidence to this.

It follows then, that the Prophet described by *Moses* could not possibly be, as some imagine, only certain Persons who were to tell what was become of lost Goods, &c. because,

1. There manifestly was no Need of any Evidence to be given, whereby the People should know, that certain Persons were able to tell them what was become of their lost Goods, but their really telling what was become of them, the Thing proving itself. And to suppose that any other Evidence was promised to such Persons, is to suppose that an Evidence was promised which

* Deut. xviii. 21.

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could not possibly be of any Service to those to whom it was promised : For if upon their applying to a certain Person to restore them their lost Goods, this Person did restore them, there wanted no Evidence of his Ability to do it ; and if he did not restore them, no Evidence would persuade them that he did, or that he was a proper Person to be apply'd to on such Occasions. And to suppose that the only Evidence promised whereby the People should know, that certain Persons were able to restore them their lost Goods, was really restoring of them, appears from God's Answer to it an impossible Supposition : For in that Case, the Enquiry put by God into the Mouth of the People would be this, *How shall I know who shall be able to tell me what is become of my lost Goods?* God's Answer, *He that does tell you what is become of them is able to do it.*

Secondly, It was to be required of them if they did not hearken to this Prophet, which could not possibly have been the Case, if his Business had only been to tell what was become of lost Goods ; it being manifestly no Crime not to seek to, and hearken to this Sort of Persons, who at best were only tolerated by the true God to keep his People from seeking to false ones.

And *Thirdly*, The timing of this Promise, as well as the Penalty annexed to the not receiving the Words of this Prophet, *as the Words of God's Mouth*, shews, that what he was to deliver was of much more Importance to Man-

kind, than only telling them what was become of their lost Goods.

Thus, When the People were frighted at the Manner in which God had delivered the Law, and said, ^a *Let me not hear again the Voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great Fire any more, that I die not :* God answered, *They have* ^b *well spoken that which they have spoken.* (Their Request is what I approve of.) *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* (When I again deliver new Commands unto the People, I will speak unto them in the Person of a Man like unto Thee.) *And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken to my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* (Whoever does not hearken to the Words of this Prophet as to the Words of God, I will punish his Disbelief.) *But the Prophet who shall presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the Name of other Gods, even that Prophet shall die.* (An Impostor, one who shall presume to give Laws in my Name without my Commission; or one who shall draw my People into Idolatry, shall be put to Death.) *And if thou say in thy Heart, How shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken ?* (If God

^a Deut. xviii. 16. Exod. 20. 9.

^b Deut. xviii. 17, &c.

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will require it of me if I don't hearken to this Prophet, or if I hearken to a Deceiver, you must tell me how I may infallibly know the one from the other.) Why, thus shall ye know an Impostor, *When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the Thing follow not, nor come to pass* (if God does not bear him witness by some extraordinary Sign) *that is the Thing which the Lord hath not spoken.*

Now then that the Thing which was to follow or come to pass was some extraordinary Sign, something Miraculous, is certain; otherwise the Prophet, which was to be hearken'd to; could not have been distinguished from an Impostor; and if the Thing which was to come to pass could be effected by human Power, an Impostor might pass for the Prophet.

It is evident then that the Prophet, who should be hearken'd to in all that he should deliver, was to have the Evidence of Miracles, the Evidence which *Moses* had, whom it was promised he should resemble.

Now then we are to see, whether *Moses's* Characters of a Prophet, and the promised Evidence meet in *Jesus*, and whether we have Reason to think him that Prophet whom *Moses* describes.

He is *raised up from amidst his Brethren.*

He resembles *Moses* in the working of Miracles.

He delivered a Doctrine worthy of God and suitable to his Nature.

And

And he spake in the Name of the Lord, and the Thing which he spake, followed and came to pass; He work'd Miracles. What hinders then that *Jesus* is not acknowledged as the Prophet foretold by *Moses*?

See his own Claim and Argument. *The Works that I do, ^a bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. The Father ^b that sent me, beareth witness of me. The Works that I do in ^c my Father's Name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the Works of my Father, ^d believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him. Believe me for the very ^e Works Sake. If I had ^f not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin.* (If my Miracles, my Evidence from God, had not been more clear, more convincing than any other Man's, who has ever yet appeared in the World, their Infidelity had not been so unpardonable.) Again, *^g Do not think that I will accuse you; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust; for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, &c.*

Here then, in *Jesus*, is the very Prophet *Moses* describes, and in his Miracles the very Evidence *Moses* promised; both Character and Attestation answer in every Point and Cir-

^a John v. 36.
^d John x. 37, 38.
22, & 24.

^b John viii. 18.
^e John xiv. 11.
^g John v. 45, & 46.

^c John x. 25.
^f John xv.

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cumstance; and he has a Right to be acknowledged as that Prophet which *Moses* foretold.

We see, not only *Jesus* applies this Prophecy to himself, but also ^a *Peter* and ^b *Stephen* apply it to him, and argue with the *Jews* that it is fulfill'd.

If it should be said, false Prophets may do Signs and Wonders, or work Miracles, otherwise the *Jews* could not have been caution'd not to be deceived by such Means, and consequently, that whatever can be a possible Character of a false Prophet, cannot be the Evidence of a True one:

I answer, false Prophets can never work Miracles; and as no Being can change the Laws of Nature without the Consent of the Lord of it; so cannot he consent to the changing of his Laws to give Evidence to Falshood, for that would be to act in Opposition to himself.

^c But Impostors may to some Persons appear to work Miracles; they may by a Knowledge of certain Powers of Nature, of which the Vulgar are Ignorant, seem to them to do Things above the Power of Nature; and on that Account there is need of Caution against them.

If it is yet urged that these Words of *Moses* are not applicable to *Jesus* only, but to all

^a Acts iii. 22.
Miracles par Mr. Sercees.

^b Acts vii. 37.

^c See *Traité des*

other Prophets who work Miracles ; I answer, they are in all Parts only applicable to *Jesus*, as appears not only from the *Jewish* History, but also from the Confession of one of their own Prophets in the Time of ^a*Ezra*, since which there is no Pretence that any Person has appear'd like unto *Moses*.

But granting the Thing, granting that these Words were in all Parts applicable to other Persons besides *Jesus*, yet it would not lessen the Evidence which they give him. Suppose God Almighty should distinguish a Succession of Persons from the rest of Mankind by particular Characters, and foretel them by these Characters, it would not lessen the Evidence of any particular Person amongst them, that others were foretold also. When a Person appears, and answers Descriptions which only could be foretold by God, we are to receive him as witnessed by Prophecy; and if another appears and answers the same Descriptions, we are to receive him also as foretold by God, and our receiving him will not lessen the Evidence of the first; it will not, unless God cannot endue two Persons with equal Powers.

Putting then a Case which our Opposers would desire, and which certainly is not the true one; that is, that these Words of *Moses* are applicable to other Persons who worked Miracles, yet it will not lessen the Evidence which they give *Jesus*; and whilst he works Miracles, and

^a Deut xxxiv. 10.

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teaches a Doctrine worthy of God, he has a Right to be received as foretold by *Moses*.

If it is said that those Words of *Moses* are no Prophecy at all, but are only a Criterion whereby to try a Prophet from an Impostor, I answer, they cannot be only such a Criterion, for they directly foretel the Appearance of a Person. ^a *And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet like unto thee, and I will put my Words into his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him, &c.*

We find then upon an Examination of *Jewish* Books that *Jesus* fulfils Prophecy, and also that he has the highest Evidence of it; he answers antecedent Descriptions, which could only be given by the Lord of Nature.

And we might go on to shew that *Jesus* not only fulfils this Prophecy of *Moses*, but also many others in the *Jewish* Books; and that there are many Descriptions in these Books, of a Person who was to appear and be a Blessing to Mankind, with several Circumstances which were to attend his Appearance, and also the Time of it, which were fulfilled in *Jesus*, and at his Appearance: But of these I shall speak afterwards; it being evident that from this Prophecy alone *Jesus* has made out his Claim, and has a Right to be received as foretold by God.

^a Deut. xviii. 17, 18.

Proceed we then to answer another Objection; and it is urged,

2. That *Jesus* not only pretends to be the Prophet foretold by *Moses*, but also the *Messiah* of the *Jews*, a Person expected under another Character besides that of a Prophet; but he is not this Person; consequently, an Impostor.

I answer, If *Jesus* has a Right to be receiv'd as the Prophet foretold by *Moses*, then has he a Right to be receiv'd as the *Messiah* of the *Jews*; since that Prophet has a Right to be hearkned to in whatever he should deliver, and *Jesus* declares ^a himself to be this Person.

But, say the *Jews*, or others for them, the *Messiah* was to appear under a different Character than that in which *Jesus* appear'd; consequently, *Jesus* is not this Person.

Let then the Objector make out this Point; let him give clear, and express Characters of a *Messiah* in the *Jewish* Books, and then shew that these do not belong to *Jesus*: Let him, I say, give clear and express Characters of a *Messiah*; otherwise we cannot regard the Objection, and we cannot set doubtful Interpretations and uncertain Meanings against a Testimony supported by both Miracle, and Prophecy.

But, upon an Examination of the *Jewish* Scriptures, we find that the *Jews* can do no such Thing; on the contrary, several acknowledged Characters of the *Messiah* are found in

^a John iv. 26.]

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Jesus. Particularly, he is of the Tribe, Family, and Town of which the *Jews* confess that the *Messiah* was to be born; and he appeared at a Time when they themselves expected him; and during a Period in which, unless their own Books are Imposture, he must have appeared, as will be seen afterwards.

But, say the *Jews*, according to these Scriptures the *Messiah* was to be a temporal Prince, and to reign visibly over the *Jews*. Let then the *Jews* produce their Evidence for such an Assertion; let them produce plain and express Testimony out of their own Books that the *Messiah* was to be a temporal Prince, and at his first Appearance on Earth to reign visibly over the *Jews*: But the *Jew* cannot do this, nor is there any such Testimony concerning the *Messiah* in his Books: On the contrary, if we search the *Jewish* Books we shall find that those very Texts, on which the *Jews* ground their Expectation of a temporal *Messiah*, relate only to a Spiritual one, such a one as *Jesus* pretended to be. And if the *Jews* say, that the following Texts, and others of the same Nature, are not the Grounds on which they expect a temporal *Messiah*, they must produce those that are, and shew that what they produce really do relate to the *Messiah*, and cannot possibly belong to any other Person.

In that ^a *Day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious.* ^b *Unto us a Child is*

^a *Isaiah* iv. 2.

^b *Isaiah* ix. 6, 7.

born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon his Shoulder; and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the Increase of his Government and Peace there shall be no end, upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom to order it, and to establish it with Judgment and with Justice from henceforth even for ever; the Zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this. But ^a thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose Goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. ^b There shall come forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his Roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick Understanding in the Fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the Sight of his Eyes, neither reprove after the Hearing of his Ears; but with Righteousness shall he judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity, for the Meek of the Earth: And he shall smite the Earth with the Rod of his Mouth, and with the Breath of his Lips shall he slay the Wicked. And Righteousness shall be the Girdle of his Loins, and Faithfulness the Girdle of his Reins. And in ^c Mercy shall the

^a Mic. v. 2.

^b Isaiah xi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

^c Isaiah xvi. 5.

Throne be established, and he shall sit upon it in Truth, in the Tabernacle of David, judging and seeking Judgment, and hastening Righteousness. Behold ^a a King shall reign in Righteousness, &c. Behold, the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth. In his Days Judah ^b shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his Name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. Behold my ^c Servant whom I uphold, my Elect in whom my Soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth Judgment unto the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his Voice to be heard in the Streets. A bruised Reed shall he not break: and the smoking Flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth Judgment unto Truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has set Judgment in the Earth: and the Isles shall wait for his Law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the Heavens, and stretched them out, he that spread forth the Earth, and that which cometh out of it, he that giveth Breath unto the People upon it, and Spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in Righteousness, and will hold thine Hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a Covenant to the People, for a Light to the Gentiles: To open the blind Eyes, to bring

^a Isaiah xxxii. 1.
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

^b Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

^c Isaiah xlii. 1.

out the Prisoners from the Prison, and them that sit in Darkness out of the Prison-house. I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory will I not give to another, neither my Praise to graven Images. Behold, my ^a Servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee, (his Visage was so marred more than any Man, and his Form more than the Sons of Men) so shall he sprinkle many Nations, the Kings shall shut their Mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider. I saw ^b in the Night Visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Antient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him Dominion and Glory, and Kingdom, that all People, Nations, and Languages should serve him: his Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. ^c Rejoyce greatly, O Daughter of Zion; shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having Salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Ass, and upon a Colt the Foal of an Ass. Sing ^d and rejoyce, O Daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many Nations shall be joined to the Lord in that Day,

^a Isaiah lii. 13, 14, 15.
^d Zech. ii. 10, 11, 12.

^b Dan. vii. 13, 14.

^c Zech. ix. 9.

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and shall be my People: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his Portion in the Holy Land, and shall chuse Jerusalem again. ^a And the Lord shall be King over all the Earth, in that Day there shall be one Lord, and his Name one. In that ^b Day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign of the People; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his Rest shall be glorious. And he will ^c destroy in this Mountain, the Face of the Covering cast over all People, and the Veil that is spread over all Nations. He will swallow up Death in Victory, &c. Say to them ^d that are of a fearful Heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with Vengeance, even God with a Recompence, he will come and save you. Then the Eyes of the Blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame Man leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb sing: for in the Wilderness shall Waters break out, and Streams out of the Desert. And the ^e Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all Flesh shall see it together: for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And the ^f Gentiles shall come to thy Light, and Kings to the Brightness of thy Rising. I will ^g also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my Salvation

^a Zech. xiv. 9.

^b Isaiah xi. 10.

^c Isaiah xxv. 7, 8.

^d Isaiah xxxv. 4, 5, 6.

^e Isaiah xl. 5.

^f Isaiah lx. 3.

^g Isaiah xlix. 6.

^h Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.

unto the End of the Earth. The ^a Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good Tidings unto the Meek, he hath sent me to bind up the Broken-hearted, to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the Opening of the Prison to them that are bound. Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an end of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. ^c And in the Days of these Kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other People, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these Kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. ^c And the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever. ^d And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the Peace of thy Children.

Now we say, that either these Characters and Circumstances of a King and Kingdom, with others of a like Nature are the grounds, on which the Jews found their Expectation of a Temporal Messiah, or they are not: If they are, then we can prove (and it is evident to every impartial Enquirer who considers these Texts) that they only can relate to a Spiritual

^a Dan. ix. 24.

^b Dan. ii. 44.

^c Mic. iv. 7.

^d Isaiah liv. 13.

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King and Kingdom, such a King as *Jesus* pretended to be, and such a Kingdom as he pretended his was; and that it is impossible to apply them to a Temporal one. If these are not the Texts on which the *Jews* found their Expectation of a Temporal *Messiah*, they must produce those that are; and before we acknowledge that the *Messiah* was to be a Temporal Prince, contrary to the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy, we must see clear and express Testimony that he was to be such; it must be proved from Words that admit no other possible Meaning; but, as has been observed, the *Jew* has no such clear and express Testimony that the *Messiah* was to be a Temporal Prince, nor any Expressions concerning his being such which admit no other possible Meaning: then *Jesus* is the *Messiah* for any thing yet found in the *Jewish* Books to the contrary.

We pass on then *Thirdly*, To another grand *Jewish* Objection which is this, The *Jews* were commanded to observe their Law *for ever*: but *Jesus* and his Apostles abolished this Law; therefore *Jesus* and his Apostles are Impostors.

The Question then is, whether God required of the *Jews* a perpetual Observation of their whole Law, and whether the Expressions concerning the Duration of this Law, can have but one possible Meaning; which is, that it was God's Will that it should be observed *for ever*, and never give way to another Dispensation.

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In order to resolve this Point, we must remember that in a Divine Revelation no one Part can contradict another, and particular Texts must first be reconciled betwixt themselves, before any Thing can be advanced from any of them.

Now *Moses* and other Prophets commanded the *Jews* to observe *for ever* the Law given to them by God.

Moses likewise assures them, that a Prophet should arise *like unto himself*, who should *speak to them the Words of God*, and to whom if they *did not hearken*, it would be *required of them*.

And the Calling of the Gentiles is foretold by many of the Prophets.

Those Texts then which require a perpetual Observation of the *Jewish* Law; and that particular one which commands, that *a Person who speaks in the Name of the Lord, and the Thing which he speaks, follows and comes to pass, should be hearkened to*; and those which foretel the Calling of the Gentiles, must have all such Meanings as are consistent with each other.

When then a Person appears with the promised Evidence, the *Jews* were to hearken to him, and to receive him as the promised Prophet. But when this Person, or those who act by his Authority and Commission, abolish the Law of *Moses*, then were the Jews to examine the Expressions concerning the Duration of their Law, and to see whether these Expressions

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sions can possibly be understood according to the Sense put on them by those who abolish this Law; whether this Law may give way to another Dispensation.

This is the true Point to be considered here: for if the Expressions concerning the Duration of this Law can be understood in a limited Sense, and do not strictly mean a perpetual Duration; then we ought to understand them in that Sense which is put on them by those who have the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy.

And upon examination of these Texts we immediately find that they are not only capable of being understood in a limited Sense, but that really they can have no other; the Calling of the Gentiles being inconsistent with a perpetual Observation of the Law of *Moses*, some part of this Law consisting in a Separation of the *Jews* from other Nations.

Upon the whole then, the true State of the Matter seems to be this: The Law was to be observed as long as it was a Law, till the Power who made should abolish it; till the Prophet should arise who should be as a God to the People and give them a new Dispensation; till the happy time when the Gentiles should be called, and all Nations serve the Lord.

The *for ever* does not relate to the Law but to the Peoples Duty; they were to observe it *for ever*, that is, as long as it was a Law.

And

And in this Sense is the Expression *for ever* understood when it relates to Laws promulg'd by a human Legislator. The People are required to observe them *for ever*, that is, as long as they are Laws; but the Legislator does not by this Expression preclude himself from annulling these Laws, if he thinks fit so to do, nor do the People understand the Expression in this Sense.

Suppose that God when he gave these Laws; designed they should be abolished, and give way to another Dispensation; would he not, think we, have commanded the *Jews* to observe them for ever? Doubtless he would have done this, it being their indispensable Duty to do so; to observe them as long as they were Laws, and until he pleased to abrogate them. We cannot suppose he would acquaint them with the designed Change, which would have been a probable Means to have lessened their Esteem for That which it was their Duty to observe.

Yet again, We may and ought to conclude that several of the Expressions concerning the Duration of the *Jewish* Law related only to the Moral Part of it; and as to this, it is very evident that *Jesus* according to his own Words, might properly be said to *come not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill*.

And we may yet farther observe that the Expression *for ever* is often used in a limited Sense in the *Jewish* Scriptures; thus an ever-

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lasting

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lasting Priesthood is promised to ^a *Aaron and his Sons*.

Again, from God's own Expressions concerning this Law we have Reason to think it was only occasional, and given for a Time; thus he says, *he gave them* ^b *Statutes which were not good, &c.*

Again, from the Nature and Office of the Person foretold by *Moses*, and the particular Evidence which was to be given him, it is evident that he was to be Author of a new Dispensation.

In a word, The *Jew* must, to make the Expressions in his own Books concerning the Duration of the *Jewish* Law any Objection against *Jesus's* being the Prophet foretold by *Moses*, or the *Messiah* of the *Jews*, shew that these Expressions can have but one possible Sense, which is, that this Law was to be observed as long as the World should last, and never give way to another Dispensation; but, as has been seen, the *Jew* cannot possibly do this, therefore the Expressions in the *Jewish* Books concerning the Eternity of the *Jewish* Law, can be no Objection against *Jesus's* being the Person he pretended to be.

Fourthly, It is objected that *Jesus* and his Apostles apply'd many Places of Scripture to themselves, which did not belong to them; consequently are Impostors.

^a Exod. xl. 15. Numb. xxv. 13.]

^b Ezra xx. 25.

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Before we examine into the Truth of this Charge, we may remark that it is very strange, that Persons who were in possession of the very best Evidence which could be given them, Miracle and Prophecy, and who had Craft enough to deceive thus far, should yet be so weak as to invalidate their own Evidence by Misapplications. We might rather expect they would have let their Cause rest upon a good Footing, when they had once got it there, and not have taken the most probable Step to the Ruin of it. But be this as it will, certain it is that only Impostors can misapply: The Question then is, whether the Texts apply'd by *Jesus* and his Apostles, are Misapplications.

Now if *Jesus*, or his Apostles, affix'd a Sense to Words which they could not possibly bear; if they apply'd Characters to themselves which could not belong to them, if they pretend to be spoken of when they are not spoken of, then they are guilty of Misapplications, and are Impostors.

But we must observe, that nothing but their affixing impossible Meanings, can be called Misapplications; and as they were in possession of Miracle and Prophecy, they have a Right before all other Persons, to interpret Difficulties; and a possible Sense supported by Miracle and Prophecy, ought to be received before that which is only the Product of Human Judgment.

We are then to proceed to an Examination of the objected Places, and in order to this,

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think

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think it proper to take a View of the *Jewish* Dispensation.

The *Jewish* Dispensation consisted of many *Rites, Ceremonies, and Sacrifices*, which seem in their own Nature to have no Worth or Excellency in them, and to have nothing to recommend them but the Commands of the Legislator.

Again, The Legislator himself places no Worth or Excellency in them, tells the *Jews* that he gave them ^a *Statutes which were not good*; and assures them that the most punctual Observation of these *Statutes* would be to no purpose, nor render them acceptable to him, if they were deficient in other Duties.

This is the *Jewish* Law as we find it: Now let us see the Gospel Account of it.

And this acquaints us that these *Rites, Ceremonies, Sacrifices*, and whole Law, were preparatory to, and symbolical of, the Dispensation by *Jesus*; that they were given *only for a Time*, and *because of Transgression*, and until the Dispensation should arrive, *promised to Abraham four hundred Years before the giving of the Law*, in which *all the Families of* ^b *the Earth were to be blessed*, in which *Jesus appeared to bless us, in turning* ^c *every one of us from our Iniquities*. Thus the Author to the *Hebrews*, Being ^d *made perfect*, he became the Author of *Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him*.

^a Ezek. xx. 25. ¹ Ch. Isaiah
iii. 26. ^d Heb. v. 9.

^b Gal. iii. 8, 17.

^c Acts

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By ^a his own Blood he entered in once into the holy Place, having obtain'd Eternal Salvation for us. Once ^b in the End of the World, hath he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.

Now in what Manner the first Dispensation was symbolical, and representative of the second, this Author in several Chapters sets before us. He says, that the *Priests under the Law serve as an ^c Example and Shadow of Heavenly Things, that the High ^d Priest went alone, once every Year, into the Holy of Holies, the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the Way into the Holiest of all, was not yet made manifest while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a Figure for the Time then present, in which were offered both Gifts and Sacrifices, &c. And speaking of the Rites, Sacrifices, and Sprinklings under the Law by the Blood of Calves and Goats; he says, It was therefore necessary ^e that the Patterns of Things in the Heavens should be purified with these, but the Heavenly Things themselves [represented by those Patterns] with better Sacrifices than these. For Christ is not enter'd into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven it self, now to appear in the Presence of God for us.*

This is this Author's Account of the Jewish Dispensation; and those strangely mistake

^a Heb. ix. 12.

^d Heb. ix. 7, 8.

^b Heb. ix. 26.

^e Heb. ix. 23, 24.

^c Heb. viii. 5. ix. 24.

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Things who say that these Places in the *Hebrews* are only *Allusions* or *Accommodations*. He plainly tells us, That the *Priests*, *High-Priests*, *Tabernacles*, *Sacrifices* and *Law* were *Shadows*, *Patterns*, *Figures*, *Examples* of the *Dispensation* by *Jesus*. And *Jesus* himself says, That the *Law* ^a and *Prophets* prophecy'd until *John*. That he ^b came to fulfil the *Law* and *Prophets*; and that till *Heaven* and *Earth* pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the *Law* till all be fulfilled; that is, the *Law* should in no Part be abolish'd till that *Dispensation* should arrive, of which the *Law* was only a *Resemblance*. Again *Jesus* says, he ^c will not eat any more of the *Passover* till it be fulfilled in the *Kingdom of Heaven*: That is, till the *Lamb* is sacrificed, which this *Paschal Lamb* was to represent.

Now then, this being the Account which *Jesus* and his *Apostles* give us of the *Jewish* Dispensation, the Question is, Whether it is a possible one? If it is, it will follow that it ought to be received as a true one, being supported by *Miracle* and *Prophecy*.

And upon the first View we find that this is not only a possible Account of the *Jewish* Dispensation, but likewise the most rational and consistent one that can be given of it; and if it was suitable to the *Divine Wisdom* to give *Jesus* to live and die for the Sake of Mankind, it is reasonable to expect that a Mode of Wor-

^a Matth. xi. 13.

^b Matth. v. 17, 18.

^c Luke xxii. 16.

ship, which himself would institute, should bear Resemblance to this great propitiatory Sacrifice; That the whole *Jewish* Dispensation should shew forth his Death before he came, after the same Manner as that Sacrament which he himself instituted, does shew forth his Death since he is come.

The *Jews* cannot object to the Reasonableness of such an Institution, they who were commanded to express their Deliverances by Symbols of them, who yearly offered up the *Paschal Lamb, the Firstlings* ^b of their Flocks, and who observed the *Feast* ^c of Tabernacles.

And other Nations cannot object to it, it being a common Practice with them, as may be shewn from many Instances taken from different Countries, to celebrate great Deliverances by Symbols of those Deliverances.

But, as before, not so much as this is wanted in the present Argument; and if the Account given of the *Jewish* Dispensation by *Jesus* and his Apostles is only a possible one, it ought to be receiv'd as a true one.

And if it ought to be receiv'd as a true one, many of those Difficulties, which arise from certain Applications made by these Persons, will vanish, as will appear from a Consideration of them.

Farther, As God might make the Law symbolical of the Gospel, so might he, if he pleas'd, purposely make some Events under the first

^a Exod. xii.

^b Exod. xiii.

^c Lev. xxiii. 34.

Dispensation, resemble others under the second; the Reason why he should do this may be consider'd afterwards; all we at present want is, that it be allow'd possible for him to do it. But it must be allow'd possible for him to do it, there being nothing in this Way of acting disagreeable to his Attributes.

Again, It is likewise possible for God, that is, it is not unsuitable to his Nature, to give the *Jewish* Nation Signs of temporal Deliverance which should bear Resemblance to a greater Deliverance, the Appearance of the *Messiah*. As he often pointed out temporal Deliverances by Signs of them, as may be shewn from many Instances, it could be no Contradiction to his Attributes to make these Signs, if he pleas'd, Signs also of that great Deliverance.

Yet once more, If the first Dispensation was given for the sake of the second, and only added *for a Time because of Transgressions*, as from a View of both Dispensations it is rational to think it was, then we may expect that the Prophets under the first should be full of Descriptions of this last; that what they deliver should tend to something farther than the present State of Things, and to draw the People's Attention to the great Deliverance design'd for them.

We now proceed to examine some Applications made by *Jesus* and his Apostles, in order to see whether they are impossible ones.

We

We will divide the apply'd Texts into two Sorts; and first speak of those which seem to be indeterminate, neither applicable to the present Circumstances of Affairs at the Time of Delivery, nor to the Person of the Prophet who delivered them.

Secondly, Of those which seem determinate, that is, which at first View appear to relate to the Person of the Prophet, present Times, or State of Things.

Of the first Sort are the following ones. *All ye ^a shall be offended because of me this Night: For it is Written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep of the Flock shall be scattered abroad. And he ^b was number'd with the Transgressors, &c.*

These Places are apply'd to *Jesus* by himself; now the Question is, what is the Evidence that they related to him?

First, They exactly in all Parts and Circumstances correspond with the Character of *Jesus*.

Secondly, There is the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy that they do relate to him.

But we want not so much as this in the present Argument; and if it cannot be proved that these Texts could not possibly relate to *Jesus*, it cannot be proved that he has misapply'd them: But it cannot be proved that they could not possibly relate to *Jesus*, then it cannot be proved that he has misapply'd them.

^a Matth. xxxvi. 31. Zech. xiii. 7.
Isaiah liii. 13.

^b Mark xv. 28.

Secondly, The following Texts from the Manner in which they are delivered, at first View seem to relate to the Person of the Prophet, Time of Delivery, or the then State of Things. Behold, ^a a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emanuel. When ^b Israel was a Child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt. They ^c gave me Gall for my Meat and in my Thirst they gave me Vinegar to drink. ^d They part my Garments among them, and cast Lots upon my Vesture. They ^e weighed for my Price thirty Pieces of Silver. And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the Potter: A goodly Price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty Pieces of Silver, and cast them to the Potter in the House of the Lord. ^f I will declare the Decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for thy Possession. ^g I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right Hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth, my Flesh also shall rest in Hope. For thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy one to see Corruption. Thou wilt shew me the Path of Life; in thy Presence is Fulness of

^a Matth. i. 23. ^h Isaiah vii. 14.

Hosea xi. 1.

^c Psalm lxi. 21.^b Matth. ii. 15.

Psalm xxii. 18.

^e Matth. xxvii. 9.^d Matth. xxvii. 35.^f Psalm ii. 7, 8.

Zech. xi. 12.

^g Psalm xvi.

Joy, and at thy right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

These, and many other Places which at first View seem to relate to the Times in which they were spoken, or the Person of the Speaker, are produced, and differently apply'd by *Jesus*, and his Apostles.

The Point we are next to examine then is, whether the Applications made by these Persons are possible Ones.

And no sooner is this Point examin'd, but we find that though some of these Texts do at first View seem to relate to the Times in which they were spoken, or the Person of the Speaker, yet that they really do not, but must relate to other Persons, or Times. Thus, of those cited, *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee. I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for thy Possession.* These were Circumstances never applicable to *David*, and consequently, he could not in these Places speak of himself. So the Words cited out of the sixteenth Psalm could not relate to *David*; he could not call himself the *Holy One*, this Term being unsuitable to his Character, and to that Humility which appeared in his Writings. And those particular Expressions, ^a *They gave me Gall for my Meat, and in my Thirst they gave me Vinegar to drink,* ^b *they part my Garments among them, and cast Lots upon my*

^a Psalm lxix. 21.

^b Psalm xxii. 18.

Vesture, which were apply'd to *Jesus* by one of his Apostles, we have reason to think from *David's* History, were Circumstances that never happen'd in his Life.

Now, then if these Characters and Circumstances delivered by *David* could not relate to himself, they must relate to some other Person; and if they do this, he has the best Right to them whom they suit, and who can give the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy that they really relate to him.

But *Secondly*, As for those Texts which directly suit the Circumstances of Affairs when delivered, the Person of the Prophet, or the then State of Things, the Answer is direct; and if it was not unsuitable to the Wisdom of God, to let some Events under the first Dispensation resemble the great Events under the Second; if it was no Contradiction to his Attributes sometimes to give his People a Sign of temporal Deliverance, which should bear Resemblance to the greatest Deliverance they were capable of receiving: Then could it be no Misapplication to apply the Words of the first Event to the Second, of the Sign to the Thing signify'd, they being directly according to the Will of God fulfilled in both Cases.

To instance, Supposing God when he gave *Ahaz* a Sign of Deliverance from *Pekah*, and *Remaliah*, likewise intended that this should be a Sign of that great future Deliverance of Mankind, by a Child born of a Virgin; then, when *Jesus* was born of a Virgin, might *Matthew* properly

properly say, *Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, (That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, when he gave a Sign which prefigured the Birth of the Messiah,) Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, &c.*

Thus again, Supposing God when He sent his People into *Egypt*, designed sending his own Son thither, and intended that one Event should prefigure the other, then, when *Jesus* came out of *Egypt*, might *Matthew* again justly say, *That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, (That this Event might come to pass according to the Will of God, and the Expression of the Prophet concerning a former one that prefigured it,) Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

But not so much as this is wanted in the present Argument; it is not necessary that the Sign given to *Abaz* should be a Sign of the Birth of the *Messiah*; or the Event of *Israel's* being called out of *Egypt* prefigure the calling of the *Messiah* from thence, to make *Matthew's* Application just. For if a *Messiah* was intended, the whole Manner and Circumstances of his Life and Death must be also predetermin'd by God. Well then might *Matthew* when *Jesus* was born of a Virgin, or when he came out of *Egypt*, upon a Consideration of God's determinate Counsel and Knowledge, say, *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, (That*

(That this Event which God has long ago determin'd should come to pass, may now do so, according to the Expression of the Prophet,) *Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, &c. Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

But we need not seek for many Solutions of the above propos'd Difficulty; one possible one is sufficient, as has been before observed.

The whole Mistake concerning these Applications seems to be taking them in a wrong View, and imagining that *Matthew* brings them as Proof that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*. He offers at no such Thing, nor is it his Business in this Place. He is only telling a plain Narrative, the History of *Jesus*, and by the Way remarks upon several Events in which the Will of God was fulfill'd according to the Expressions of the Prophets.

In short, unless it can be proved, that the Texts applied by *Matthew* could not possibly relate to *Jesus*; that God could not, if he pleased, make Events under the first Dispensation resemble others under the Second; give Signs of temporal Deliverance which should be Signs also of Deliverance by *Messiah*; and that the Manner and Circumstance of the Appearance of the *Messiah*, was not predetermin'd by God; it cannot be proved that he has been guilty of Misapplication; but neither of the above mentioned Particulars, (much less all of them) can be proved; then it cannot be proved that *Matthew* has been guilty of Misapplication.

But Secondly, Another Mark of Falshood is objected against the Christian Religion, and that is, *Matthew* makes a false Quotation, and says, *He [Jesus] ^a came and dwelt in a City called Nazareth: That it might be fulfill'd which was spoken by the Prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene.*

This Objection is almost too slight to answer. Suppose the *Jews* had a Tradition, which arose from the Mouth of some of their Prophets, that the *Messiah* was to be a *Nazarene*; this is a much more easy Supposition than that *Matthew* should make a false Quotation, which would manifestly have been an Injury, and could not possibly have been any way an Advantage to his Cause. As then we are sure, that if *Matthew* was not an Impostor, he could not, and as we have Reason to think that if he was one, he would not make a false Quotation, we ought not to look upon it as such, notwithstanding we cannot, at so great a Distance of Time, find whence it is produced.

But another Objection yet remains, and that is, *Elias* was to come before the Coming of the *Messiah*; but *Elias* is not come; consequently, *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

The Argument stands thus. The Followers of *Jesus* do not pretend to say that *Elias* is come, if *John Baptist* is not *Elias*: But *John Baptist* is not *Elias*, (Proof his ^b own Words;) then *Elias* is not come.

^a Matth. ii. 23.

^b John i. 21.

Now the Account given by *Jesus* of this Matter is this, that *John Baptist* was the ^a *Elias* which was to come; that he was the Person promised by the Prophets under the Name of *Elias*.

The Query is, whether this is a possible Account of the Matter, whether this Assertion of *Jesus's* concerning *John Baptist* is consistent with *Jewish* Prophecy, that is, whether the calling one Person by the Name of another whom he resembles, whose Character he takes, and by *whose Spirit and Power* he acts (which is the Account given of *John Baptist* by the Angel ^b *Gabriel*) is agreeable to *Jewish* Scriptures.

This Way of Speaking is certainly agreeable to *Jewish* Scriptures, where we often find the Characters and Offices of Persons given us in their Names, and the same Person called by different Names. Instances of the first Kind are frequent; of the second, the following one is sufficient. It is said, that ^c *David*, the Son of ^d *David*, and the ^e *Lord* shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever.

It follows then, that provided *John Baptist* acted by the *Spirit and Power* of *Elias*, acted as *Elias* would have himself acted, if he had been upon Earth; it was not unsuitable to *Jewish* Prophecy to foretel him under the Name of *Elias*; but *John Baptist* did act in the *Spirit and*

^a Matth. xi. 14.

^b Luke i. 17.

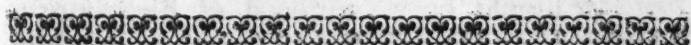
^c Ezek. xxxvii. 25.

^d Jer. xxxiii. 17, 21.

^e Micah iv. 7.

Power of Elias; act as *Elias* would himself have acted, if he had been upon Earth, for which we have the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy; then it was not unsuitable to *Jewish* Prophecy to foretel him under the Name of *Elias*. And if it was not unsuitable to *Jewish* Prophecy to foretel *John Baptist* under the Name of *Elias*, then *Jesus's* Assertion that *John Baptist* was the promised *Elias*, was not unsuitable to *Jewish* Prophecy; and if *Jesus's* Assertion concerning *John Baptist* is neither unsuitable to *Jewish* Prophecy, nor is an impossible one, then it ought to be received before any other whatsoever, having the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy, and *John Baptist* ought to be received as the promised *Elias*.

That the speaking of Persons under the Names of others, whom they resemble, is common to other Nations besides the *Jews*, is too well known to need Instances.



S E C T. XI.

AND now having shewn that the *Christian* Religion has the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy; that the *Jews* cannot consistently, with a Belief of *Moses*, reject *Jesus* as not being the *Messiah*, the Person he pretends to be; and having seen the Insignificancy of the Objections commonly urged against him, I proceed to shew,

S

That

That the *Jews* are so far from being able to prove *Jesus* not the *Messiah*, that on the contrary, their own Books are Imposture, if he is not this Person.

I pass by all those repeated Promises above produced of a *King* and *Kingdom*, *Deliverances*, *Blessings*, &c. which if not fulfilled in *Jesus*, are yet unfulfilled, and consequently are justly suspected of never coming from God; and only insist on the following ones.

God in a particular Manner calls *Abraham* from his Kindred and his Countrey, and three Times solemnly assures him^a, *That in him and his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*. Now there is no Pretence that all the Nations of the Earth have been really blessed in *Abraham*, or in any Person descended from him, unless it be in *Jesus*; and though we were to understand the Words according to the Sense which some put on them, (which doubtless is not the obvious and literal one) that is, that *Abraham* should be a Standard of Blessedness to Mankind, and People should say when they bless, *God make you as Abraham*, they are even in this Sense unfulfilled; *Abraham*, or any of his Descendants, having never been a Standard of Blessedness to any Nation, (unless perhaps a short Time to the *Jewish*) much less to all; and the Seed of *Abraham*, but in the fourth or fifth Generation from him, fell into Bondage and Slavery, recovered but short-lived Prosperity, came again into Distress, and have continued many Ages in

^a Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18.

a Condition that is the Reverse of Blessedness.

This Promise is then yet unfulfilled, or fulfilled in *Jesus*; if it is unfulfilled, then there is a Mark of Falshood in the *Jewish* Religion, it being impossible for God to promise and not to perform in due Time.

If it be replied that this Promise is yet to be fulfilled, and that *a Thousand Years with the Lord are as one Day*; I answer, that though *a Thousand Years with the Lord are as one Day*, yet they are not so with Man; and that when the supreme Being condescends to communicate himself to Man, he must act with him according to his Nature, as well as his own; he cannot then give so solemn a Promise of such a Nature to *Abraham*, and not fulfil it in above three thousand Years, and besides let the Seed of *Abraham* continue for many Generations in such a distressed and dispersed Condition, that all Hopes and human Prospect of its being ever fulfilled, ceases.

If the *Jew* yet tells us, That according to our Account of Things, this Promise was not fulfilled till near two thousand Years after it was given, and that what might for wise and good Reasons be deferr'd so long, might for as wise and good ones be deferr'd longer; I again return, That though the promised Blessing was so long deferr'd, yet by constant Revelations from God, the Prospect of its being fulfilled increased, and God kept up the Hopes and Expectations of the *Jews* by other Prophecies, which pointed out the Time, Manner, and Circumstances of this Blessing; he renew'd and confirm'd it to them

by the Mouth of his Prophets. But now as all Prophecy has ceased for above two thousand Years, there is no Prospect of its being ever fulfilled, and it stands as a Mark of Imposture in the *Jewish Religion*, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

This is the plain and direct View, in which this Text is to be consider'd; and those strangely mistake Things, who considering it simply, give it in Evidence of the *Christian Religion*. *Jesus* must be first proved the *Messiah*, before we can apply the Blessedness; and those who deny his being the *Messiah*, deny the Blessedness. Yet this Text affords a strong Argument to the *Jew*, that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*; and as he cannot pretend that it is fulfilled in any Person if not in *Jesus*, he is driven to acknowledge, either that God promised and did not perform, or that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*.

2dly, *Jacob* blessing his Sons, declares, that *The Scepter* ^b *shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come.* Here then is a remarkable Person foretold to come into the World before a certain Period; the Question then is, whether the Person foretold is the *Messiah*, or some other Person: But the *Jews* cannot possibly apply this Prophecy to any other Person; then it is yet unfulfilled, or fulfilled in *Jesus*. If it is yet unfulfilled, then there is a Mark of Falshood in the *Jewish Religion*, the Period being manifestly past before which *Jacob* declared that this Person should appear.

^b Gen. xlix. 10.

3dly, *Moses's Promise to the People, that God would send them a Prophet like unto himself, who should be in the Place of God, and speak the Words of his Mouth, &c.* is fulfilled, or not fulfilled. If it is not fulfilled, there is another Mark of Falshood in the *Jewish* Religion; if it is fulfilled, that it can be fulfilled in no other Person than *Jesus*, is evident, from the *Jewish* Accounts of their own Prophets, none of whom were like unto *Moses*, and from the direct Confession of one of them, Deut. xxxiv. 10, 11. *And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses.*

4thly, All those Promises to *David* of establishing his^e Throne for ever, letting his Seed remain as long as the Sun and Moon endureth, &c. must be fulfilled in *Jesus*, or are Delusion and Imposture. Ten Tribes were rent from *David* in the second Generation after him, and all Government has been taken from his Family for above these seventeen hundred Years: Shall we then assert that God promised and did not perform; or that these Promises may yet be fulfilled, notwithstanding there has been so long an Interruption to all Dominion in the House of *David*? The Point is evident; either these Promises are *Jewish* Forgeries, or they are fulfilled in *Jesus*.

Indeed it seems as if God by taking ten Tribes from *Rehoboam*, purposely design'd to shew the People that it was not a temporal Kingdom which was to be established in the House of *David*, and that these Promises had another Signification.

^e Psalm lxxxix.

And if we consider the last Words of the Son of Jesse, we have Reason to think that he himself understood as much. ^d *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God: And he shall be as the Light of the Morning, when the Sun riseth, even a Morning without Clouds; as the tender Grass springing out of the Earth by clear shining after Rain. Although my House be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all Things and sure: For this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, although he make it not to grow.*

5thly, The fifty-third Chapter of *Isaiab* relates to the *Messiah*, or it does not relate to him; if it does not relate to the *Messiah*, then the *Jew* must shew to whom it does relate, and who that Person is that is so great, that *Kings shut their Mouths at him*, yet is led like a Lamb to the Slaughter wounded for our Transgressions; bears the Sins of many; makes Intercession for Transgressors; sees his Seed, and prolongs his Days, after his Soul is made an Offering for Sin; Let them shew who this Person is, if it be not the *Messiah*. If they cannot do this, then there is another Mark of Falshood in the *Jewish* Religion, the Time for the Appearance of this Person being so limited by the Prophet *Daniel*, (as will appear presently) that he must be already come, if *Daniel* is not an Impostor. For that

^d 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3, 4, 5.

Isaiab and *Daniel* both describe the same Person, is evident from comparing the Characters given by each of them.

6thly, The following remarkable Prophecy is fulfilled in *Jesus*, or the Person who delivered it is an Impostor. *Seventy Weeks are determin'd upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an End of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy, &c. And after threescore and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: And the People of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City, and the Sanctuary, and the End thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the End of the War Desolations are determined.*

Now this Prophecy cannot possibly be applied to any Person who has yet appeared in the World unless it be *Jesus*: And though the *Jews* and some Persons for them, would fain apply it to one of their own High-priests, yet it is impossible they should do this, the Character of the Person, and Work he was to perform as *finishing Transgression, making an End of Sins, bringing in everlasting Righteousness, sealing up the Vision and Prophecy, &c.* being no way applicable to any such Person.

If then this Prophecy cannot possibly be applied to any Person who has yet appeared in the World unless to *Jesus*, then it is fulfilled in him, or is unfulfilled: But it cannot possibly be

^c Dan. ix. 24, & 26.

unfulfilled, unless *Daniel* who delivered it, is an Impostor; because according to him this Person was to appear before the Destruction of the City and Sanctuary, and both these have been destroy'd seventeen hundred Years.

That this Prophecy is applicable to *Jesus* in all its Parts, is confess'd by the Adversaries of *Christianity*, when they take Pains to shew that it is a *Christian* Forgery.

If we consider this Prophecy rightly, we shall not need to be critical in a Calculation of *Daniel's* *seventy Weeks*; it is enough that it was to be fulfilled before the Destruction of the City and Sanctuary: So that these being destroy'd, it must be fulfilled, or *Daniel*, who delivered it, an Impostor.

The true End of this remarkable Prophecy (like the fifty-third Chapter of *Isaiah*) seems to be, to take off Objections which might arise on Account of a suffering *Messiah*, and to confirm and establish the Weak in future Ages. Thus,

As *Abraham* had been assured that in his Seed all the Families of the Earth should be blessed; *Moses* had told the People that God would raise them up a Prophet from amidst their Brethren, who would speak to them the Words of God, and to whom they should hearken; and *Nathan*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and other Prophets, promised that the Throne of *David* should be established for ever; that a King should rule in Righteousness, &c. and were full of Descriptions of this King and Kingdom, lest the *Jews* might from hence conceive Hopes of a temporal Prince and worldly

ly Prosperity and Grandeur, God kindly guarded them against so dangerous a Mistake, and let them know by his Prophet *Isaiab*, that the Prince who was to be their Deliverer, was to have *no outward Form or Comeliness, but to be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; that the Evil he was to deliver them from, was *their Sins*; and that the Manner in which he was to do it, was by *Wounds, Sufferings, Stripes, Death*; and again, he by *Daniel* confirms this, perhaps unacceptable, Truth, and fixes a *Period*, namely, the Destruction of their *City and Sanctuary*, before which, he assures them their Prince should be thus treated and cut off.

7thly, The Time is so limited for the fulfilling another remarkable Prophecy, that it must be fulfilled, or the Person who delivered it an Impostor, *† The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple: Even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

Now there is no Pretence, nor can be any, that this Text is fulfilled, if not in *Jesus* (in his being the *Messiah*, and in Person in the Temple) and if it is not fulfilled, then neither can it ever be; the Temple being destroyed. And if it neither is, nor can be fulfilled, unless *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, then it is either fulfilled in him, or is Delusion and Imposture.

So again, those other Texts, *I will shake all Nations, and the Desire of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this House with Glory, saith*

† Malachi iii. 1.

§ Hag. ii. 7, 9.

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the Lord of Hosts. The Glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts, can in no Sense be true, according to the best Accounts of both Temples, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

Again, lastly, There are several Prophecies concerning the Calling of the *Gentiles*, which are yet unfulfilled, or fulfilled by calling of them to the *Christian* Religion. If they are yet unfulfilled, then we cannot reconcile with the Wisdom and Justice of God his suffering so remarkable and amazing a Conversion of *Gentiles* to a false Religion, which was a direct Way to draw the *Jews* into Error by an Application of this Event to their Prophecies; if they are fulfilled, that they can only be fulfilled in the Conversion of the *Gentiles* to *Christianity*, is evident.

Now if one remarkable Text standing for many Ages unfulfilled, raises Suspicion of Falshood, several Texts doing so, and some of them such as now never can be fulfilled, are evident Proofs of it.

We can have no greater Certainty of a Revelation than we have, that God cannot deceive; that he will not require our Assent to his Will without giving us sufficient Evidence that it is such; that he will deal with us according to our Nature, &c. He cannot then promise to *Abraham*, that in his Seed all the Families of the Earth should be blessed, and yet defer this Blessings above three thousand Years; to *Moses*, that he would raise up a Prophet like unto himself, who should speak the Words of God, yet never

never send any such Person; to *David*, to *establish his Throne for ever*, yet immediately rend ten Tribes from him, and let his Seed be scattered seventeen hundred Years together over the Face of the Earth; to *come suddenly to his Temple*, and *fill it with Glory*, yet let the Temple be destroyed so that 'tis impossible he should do this; to *make an End of Sins*, to *make Reconciliation for Iniquity*, and to *bring in everlasting Righteousness*, and to *seal up the Vision and Prophecy*, yet never send any Person on such an Errand. These are direct Impossibilities; and I must conclude, according to my Proposition, That the *Jewish Religion* is Imposture, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

It is remarkable, and worth observing, that the Evidence to a *Jew* of *Jesus's* being the *Messiah*, increas'd with the Difficulties which arose against it; and that every Circumstance was guarded, which might be an Occasion of stumbling to them. This seems to be the Wisdom of God.

Thus, When *Jesus* appear'd and preached the true God; gave the most perfect System of Morality, and work'd Miracles; he ought to have been received as a Teacher from God, on account of his Miracles, and also as the Prophet foretold by *Moses*. And accordingly, as has been observed, he expects their Conviction upon this Evidence, *Believe me for the very Works Sake, &c. If I had not done among you the Works which no other Man did, &c.* And again, when *John* sent two of his Disciples to

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ask him, ^h *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* He only answers by recounting his Works, *Go and shew John, says he, those Things which ye do hear and see: The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* (The Number and Nature of my Works, my Miracles, are full Evidence that I am the promised Prophet, and blessed is he, who not prejudiced by worldly Views, can receive this Evidence, and be my Disciple.)

Here then, the Works of *Jesus*, his Miracles, were full Evidence that he was the Prophet *Moses* foretold, and the promised *Messiah*. But when he came to suffer, then had the *Jews* a Stumbling-block, owing to their own Prejudices and worldly Attachments. Now was the Hour come, when *blessed was he who was not offended at a suffering Messiah*. Now was it Time for the *Jews* again to look into their Books to which *Jesus* over and over kindly refers them. Here *Isaiab*, *Daniel*, and *Zachary*, set them right by telling them, that the *Messiah was to be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; that he was to pour out his Soul to Death; that after threescore and two Weeks he should be cut off, but not for himself; and that the Sword should awake against a Man that was Fellow to the Lord of Hosts.*

^h Matt. xi. 3, 4.

Again, When Persecution arose, which was another Bar to Flesh and Blood, then were those remarkable Prophecies concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*, fulfilled, and fulfilled under this extraordinary disadvantageous Circumstance, that the Conversion was to a persecuted Church.

When the City and Temple were destroy'd, then had the *Jews* Demonstration that the *Messiah* was come, or that *Daniel*, who told them that the *Messiah* should be cut off before this Period; and *Malachi* and *Haggai* who had promised that *the Lord should come suddenly to his Temple*, and that *the Glory of the second House should be greater than that of the former*, were Impostors.

And at this Day the dispersed and distressed Condition of the *Jews*, as well as their unfulfilled Prophecies, is an Evidence against them.

Though it is not necessary that God, after he has once revealed himself, should give fresh Evidences to his Revelation in different Ages, yet 'tis necessary that he do not mislead and give Grounds for Hope of Deliverance, yet not let this Deliverance ever arrive; and further let an Impostor arise to whom the Characters of the promised, and expected Person, are so suitable, that by that Means he draws Multitudes into Error. In this Case the People favour'd with a Revelation, are in a worse Condition than all others, one Part of them being deceived by an Impostor, the other left to languish in fruitless Hopes and Expectations.

But, if the *Jewish* Religion advances Inconsistencies

Again,

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sistencies and Impossibilities, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*; on the contrary, change the Prospect, and, if he is this Person, the whole of it is rational and consistent.

In the first Place, it is rational to expect that the *Messiah*, a Person who was *to speak the Words of God*, to be hearken'd to *in all Things*, and to be the Author of a new Dispensation, should be foretold by the *Jewish* Prophets, particularly by *Moses*, this being a connecting Evidence, an Evidence that the Author of the first was the Author of the second Dispensation; that the very God who brought the People out of *Egypt*, and gave them their Law, also sent them that Person who abolished it. And as it is rational to expect that the *Messiah* should be foretold in the *Jewish* Scriptures, so in *Jesus* we find a Concurrence of all the prophetical Characters of the *Messiah*; he is truly the *Blessing* promised to *Abraham*, and in the Saviour of the World *all the Families of the Earth are blessed*; the Prophet *Moses* describes, *He delivered a Doctrine worthy of God, and spake in his Name, and the Thing which he spake followed and came to pass*; he had the divine Attestation that (according to his own Declaration) *he did not speak of himself, but whatever the Father commanded, that he spake*; he is the King promised to *David*, *Isaiab*, and *Daniel*; in his divine Nature truly reigns *over the House of Israel for ever*; *does not judge after the Sight of his Eyes, neither reprove after the Hearing of his Ears, but with Righteousness*

ⁱ John xii. 49.

judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity; and his Kingdom is such as shall not pass away, nor be left to other Hands, but shall stand for ever; he is the Man of Sufferings, *Isaiab, Daniel, and Zachary* describes; he is born of the *Tribe, Family*, and in the *Town* foretold; he appeared at the promised, and what's more, at the expected Time: When therefore all Things concur, when Miracle, Prophecy, and prophetical Characters all meet in *Jesus*, where is the Ground for Infidelity? Why is not *Jesus* acknowledged the *Messiah* of the *Jews*?

One Thing we must observe, and that is, that in a Dispute betwixt a *Jew* and a *Christian* who both acknowledge the Divinity of the Old Testament, the *Christian* Evidence, the Evidence that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, increases with Time, and consequently the *Jewish* Cause grows every Day worse and worse. And as by the Confession of the *Jews*, their Prophecies are unfulfilled, if not fulfilled in *Jesus*, they have every Day more Reason than other to believe they are fulfilled in him, or are Imposture.

On the other Hand, every independent Argument for the Divinity of the *Jewish* Religion, is a Proof of *Christianity*.

As to the *Deist*, the Evidence to him that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, the Person he pretended to be, in short is this; *Jesus* appears and teaches a Doctrine worthy of God, and worked Miracles to confirm his divine Mission. Whilst then *Jesus's* Miracles are not invalidated, he has a Right to be receiv'd as a Person sent from God. But

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he also pretends to fulfil Prophecies, and to be spoken of in a certain Book, he must then fulfil Prophecies, and be spoken of in this Book. By this Book then, which he appeals to, he must be try'd; and if it appears that he makes an impossible Claim, he is to be rejected. But no sooner is this examin'd, but we find that he does not make an impossible Claim; on the contrary, such a Person, as he appears to be, is exactly described and foretold in this Book. And further we find that he has the highest Evidence of Prophecy.

If any *Doubt* yet remains concerning the Meaning of certain Texts, it must be remembred that a possible Sense supported by Miracle and Prophecy, ought to be received before any other whatsoever.

C O N C L U S I O N.

Hitherto we have considered several Applications made by *Jesus* and his Apostles, as not vacating the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy: We now proceed to look on them in another View, and to examine how far they may be reckoned to give Evidence, and be judged rational Parts of a great Design.

And *First*, Though these Characters and Circumstances might not singly be sufficient to prove a Revelation, yet join'd with Miracle and Prophecy, they give additional Evidence, and form a threefold Cord not to be broken.

Miracle alone was sufficient Evidence that *Je-
sus*

*Jes*us was sent by God; his fulfilling Prophecies proved him to be the *Messiah* of the *Jews*; and the prophetical Characters and Circumstances come in as it were over and above, to guard against those Prejudices and unreasonable Doubts of Mankind, which might possibly arise at the Manner of his Appearance and Sufferings. And surely, it is not only probable that the *Christian* Religion is a divine Revelation, which would be sufficient to determine every rational Enquirer to embrace it; but it is no less than Demonstration, that Miracles, clear and express Prophecies, and a Number of prophetical Characters, and Circumstances, cannot meet in an Impostor.

2dly, As some of the prophetical Characters and Descriptions of the *Messiah* might be given to remove Offences, which might arise from his mean Appearance and Sufferings; so might others which describe his Grandeur, Offices, and Kingdom, be delivered wholly for the Sake of that Generation to which they were given, to keep up the Hopes and Expectations of the People, and make them have a constant Eye to this great Deliverer.

3dly, If *Jes*us be the Person he pretends to be, the Deliverer of us from our Sins, then the Dignity of his Person, and Importance of his Errand, make it reasonable to expect that the Prophets who lived before him should be full of Characters and Descriptions of him; and these Characters and Descriptions may teach us in what Manner we should receive and honour him.

4thly, As the making the Ceremonies and Sa-

crifices under the *Jewish* Law resemble the Sacrifice by *Jesus*, was a proper Mode of Worship for God to institute, because in these was the Death of *Jesus* the great Sacrifice constantly shewed forth; so was it reasonable God should make the first Dispensation a Pattern of the second, that the *Jews* might be inclined to part with the first, give the Shadow for the Substance, when the perfect Dispensation should arrive.

This is one View of the Author to the *Hebrews* in his shewing a Resemblance betwixt the Law and the Gospel; and they strangely mistake Things, who say that this Author is proving *Christianity* by typical Arguments. He is so far from attempting to prove *Christianity* at that Time, that he declares he will not do it, that *leaving the ^k Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, he will go on to Perfection*. And he gives a Reason why he will not do it, namely, because he look'd on it as an impossible Work *to renew again by ^l Repentance, those who had once been enlightened* and were fallen off; he could not hope to offer new Arguments which might convince such Apostates. Writing then as to Believers, he goes on to set before them the Difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel; the *Imperfection of the one, and the Perfection of the other*: He shews them how unable the Law was to do what they wanted of it, *take ^m away Sins*, but that in the Dispensation by *Jesus*, *their ⁿ Sins and Iniquities would be remembered no more*. That the

^k Heb. vi. 1, &c.

^m Heb. x. 4.

^l Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, &c.

ⁿ Heb. x. 17.

o Law could make nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better Hope did; that under the first Dispensation, the High-priest, ^p who offered for the Sins of others, himself wanted a Sacrifice; that under the second, we had a ^q High-priest who was holy, barmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, who after he had once offered one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever sat down on the Right Hand of God; that the Dispensation by Moses was only a Pattern, Example, Shadow, Figure of the Dispensation by Jesus. From the Imperfection then of this Dispensation, this first Covenant, as he calls it; from its being unable to take away Sins; its being only a Shadow, Pattern, Figure of the second; as well as from God's Promise to the Jews to give them a new ^r Covenant, this Author proves that God never intended that it should remain always, but that as it grew old, it should vanish away, that there should be a ^s disannulling of the Commandment going before, for the Weakness and Unprofitableness thereof; and that the Priesthood being ^t changed, there was of Necessity a Change also of the Law.

5thly, If some Events under the first Dispensation were made to resemble others under the second, it was of great Use to the Jews to reconcile them to Difficulties under this last, and was a training of them up to believe the Mysteries of the Gospel.

Thus, if they should make a Difficulty of be-

o Heb. vii. 19. p Heb. vii. 27. q Heb. vii. 26. x. 12, &c.

r Heb. viii. 6, 7, &c. to the End of the Chapter.

s Heb. vii. 18.

t Heb. vii. 12.

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believing that *Jesus* bore their Sins on the Cross this Difficulty would rationally be removed when they remembred that the Scape-Goat bore their Sins into the Wilderness. If they should object to the Possibility of *Jesus's* Resurrection after lying in the Grave three Days, they might remember that *Jonas* was delivered from the Belly of the Whale after lying there an equal Time. If they doubted of Salvation by looking to a crucified Saviour, *Moses* would put them in mind that the *Israelites* were healed of bodily Diseases by looking on the Serpent. Thus could not the *Jews* rationally object to the second Dispensation, on account of any Difficulties it contained, when they were used to believe equal Difficulties in the first.

To conclude, If God was pleased to give Signs of Deliverances and Blessings under the first Dispensation which resembled others under the second, which pointed to the great Deliverance by *Jesus*; he by this lets us see the Insignificancy of temporal Felicity consider'd abstractedly and by it self, and that there is but one Deliverance of Importance to Mankind, the Deliverance by *Jesus* the Redeemer.

F I N I S.

